

U.S. seeks to push Cyprus talks

LARNACA (AP) — U.S. envoy David Lamb flew in Tuesday in a bid to break a deadlock in talks for the reunification of this war-torn island. Mr. Lamb, the State Department's coordinator for Cyprus, is on his second visit to the island this month. "This is not a routine visit," he told reporters on arrival. "It came to see if there is anything the United States can do." Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş has rejected a package of confidence building measures proposed by the United Nations as a first step towards ending the island's 20-year-old division. Commenting on the impasse, Mr. Lamb said: "In negotiations like this it is natural to have ups and downs and it may be just one of the downs, it may not be an unbridgeable difference. An earlier effort last week by Joe Clark, the U.N. secretary-general's special representative for Cyprus, failed to persuade Mr. Denktaş to accept the U.N. package. Mr. Denktaş also has rejected a subsequent call by the European Union to reconsider his stance. He maintained that the U.N. package favoured the Greek Cypriot side.

Jordan Times

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جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي

Suspects arraigned in Brooklyn case

NEW YORK (AP) — Rashid Baz, a 28-year-old livery cab driver, pleaded innocent Tuesday at his arraignment for murder in the gunfire attack on a van carrying Hasidic students, one of whom was killed. Two alleged accomplices, accused of hindering prosecution, also were arraigned before Manhattan State Supreme Court Justice George Roberts. They also pleaded innocent. The Lebanese-born Baz said "not guilty" when asked by Mr. Roberts for his plea. He was represented in court by a new lawyer, Eric Sears. Mr. Roberts remanded Mr. Baz to jail without bail, to appear April 6 before Supreme Court Justice Harold Rothman. The other two are Hani Mohammad, operator of a car repair shop, and Bassam Mousa Reyat, who runs the Pioneer Car Service in Brooklyn's Red Hook district, where Mr. Baz was employed as a driver. Mr. Mohammad and Mr. Reyat, who allegedly helped Mr. Baz dispose of his car and some shell casings after the shooting, remained free on \$20,000 bond each.

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Jordan seeks speedy solution to standoff over Aqaba siege

Washington meeting set for Thursday on proposal for moving Red Sea inspections to port — Anani

'Jordan could not but see blockade as pressure'

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — American and Jordanian officials are scheduled to meet in Washington Thursday to discuss Jordan's demand for a solution to the negative impact on its economy of the de facto blockade of Aqaba imposed by the enforcers of the 44-month-old international sanctions against Iraq, Information Minister Jawad Al Anani said Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference after a regular Council of Ministers meeting, Dr. Anani called on the U.S. to seek a

speedy solution to the problem so that Jordan could go back to the 28-month-old American-backed Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

The government has been informed by the Jordanian embassy in Washington that a meeting has been scheduled for Thursday among Jordanian officials and representatives of all concerned U.S. government departments and agencies to discuss the issue, Dr. Anani said.

"The Jordanian government urges concerned authorities in the U.S. and also the United Nations to speed up the prop-

osal to replace offshore inspections by onshore inspections by a third neutral party," said Dr. Anani.

Speaking one day after His Majesty King Hussein told the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council that Jordan's resumption of the peace talks was contingent on a satisfactory solution to the siege of Aqaba, Dr. Anani said the Council of Ministers reviewed the King's statement and felt that "Jordan's position has been eloquently and very expressively analysed by His Majesty."

The King, in a meeting with

the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the Security Council on Monday, said: "From now on the resumption of Jordan's involvement in the peacemaking process to establish a just and lasting peace for the benefit of the entire region is contingent upon immediately addressing this completely unacceptable situation and on finding a new way of cooperating with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan."

Dr. Anani said Jordan did not share the view that the

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Legislature, popular bodies laud King's stand

AMMAN (Petra) — Representatives of official institutions, political parties and popular organisations Tuesday voiced total support for His Majesty King Hussein's firm stand and his call on the United Nations Security Council's five permanent member states to lift the siege imposed on Aqaba port.

In separate cables to the King, Upper House Speaker Ahmad Al Lawzi and Lower House Acting Speaker Abdul Razzaq Tbeishat expressed absolute support for the King's courageous and wise stands towards national, pan-Arab issues.

Mr. Lawzi said: "The influential powers who claim to respect and promote democracy and human rights are applying unjust double standards. They support the oppressor and penalise the oppressed."

"Their practices have never affected the King's firm positions. On the contrary, their actions firmed up the King's

positions, his adherence to what is right and his commitment to pursue the message for which his father, grandfathers and great grandfathers have sacrificed their lives."

Dr. Tbeishat stressed that the King's position "reflects the people's conscience, aspirations and ambitions." Your Majesty's position adds a new page to the colourful history of the Hashemites and is a new landmark in our history."

The King also received cables from the Secretary General of the Islamic Societies and Organisations Council, the secretary general of the Yaqatya party, the chairman of the Freedoms Committee at the Lower House and the director general and staff of the Ports Corporation.

The Lower House of Parliament, in a statement issued last week, called on the government to refuse to return to the U.S.-sponsored peace talks with Israel until the blockade of Aqaba is lifted

Jordan: Israeli violence threatens peace process

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan on Tuesday strongly condemned the escalation of violence by the Israeli army against Palestinians in the occupied territories and said the practices of the occupation authorities raised serious questions over Israel's commitment to achieving a just and durable peace with the Arabs.

The Israeli army said in a statement it had shot dead six Palestinians armed with assault rifles and pistols in the Gaza Strip on Monday. But eyewitnesses said the people killed were unarmed.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation said eight unarmed members of its mainstream movement Fatah were killed.

"We condemn the killing (of six) Palestinians in the Jabaliya camp yesterday and we ask Israel to take its full responsibility for the rising number of

people being killed or wounded in the occupied territories," Information Minister Jawad Al Anani said.

Addressing the press after a regular cabinet meeting, Dr. Anani said the government "believes that the continuation of violence in the occupied territories is an example of Israel's insistence on military means to counter people's resistance."

"We consider that the rising violence that is being perpetrated and being supported by the Israeli military forces there is not indicative of Israel's will to continue on the path for peace as peace should be followed," the minister said.

Dr. Anani noted that the escalation of Israeli assaults against Palestinians comes on the eve of Land Day, which falls Wednesday when Palestinians in the occupied territories and Arab Israelis mark the anniversary of the killing of

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Berlusconi storms home in Italian polls

ROME (Agencies) — Media mogul Silvio Berlusconi and his neo-fascist and fascist allies won a stunning victory in Italy's elections on Tuesday, riding a wave of disgust at the country's corruption-ridden past.

While Mr. Berlusconi's right-wing bloc scored a landslide victory, deep-seated differences among its members raised doubts about its ability to form a viable government.

Virtually complete official returns released by the interior ministry gave the three-party Freedom Alliance an absolute majority of 366 seats in the 630-seat Chamber of Deputies.

The alliance, which cashed in on public outrage at rampant corruption in mainstream parties, links Mr. Berlusconi's Forza Italia (Go Italy) party with the fascist Northern League and the neo-fascist National Alliance.

An eight-party leftist bloc led by former mainstream communists had 213 seats and the centre bloc 46, the returns showed.

In the 326-seat Senate, the interior ministry said the rightist coalition had won 155 seats; the left 122 and the centrists 31.

The election, held Sunday and Monday under new rules combining a new first-past-the-post system with traditional proportional representation, was meant to root out the old, corruption-prone system that produced shaky coalition governments through patronage as well as wheeling and dealing.

The result was a crushing defeat for former Communist Achille Occhetto, who seemed assured of victory until Mr. Berlusconi burst onto the scene just two months ago promising a "new economic

miracle," and saying he was the fresh face of Italy.

Mr. Occhetto's broad left progressive pact was a distant second on 213 seats in the lower house. Of the remainder, 46 went to a small centrist alliance including the rump of the disgraced Christian Democrats and five to minor parties.

As the extent of the triumph emerged, Mr. Berlusconi, owner of Europe's largest private media empire and soccer champions AC Milan, pledged to work fast to give Italy its 53rd government since World War II.

Strains in the fractions alliance led by his Forza Italia party, particularly with the federalist Northern League, could cloud the chances of rapid success but Mr. Berlusconi said he was confident differences would be resolved.

"I do not believe that there will be any betrayal of the

electorate which has said exactly what it wants — a united alliance which gives the country a majority and a strong, authoritative government," he told a radio interviewer.

Gianfranco Fini, leader of the neo-fascist National Alliance, also called for a swift government accord.

"Tonight all of Italy knows we have finally won," Mr. Fini told a jubilant midnight victory rally in Rome to straight arm salutes from young supporters.

Financial markets had surged on Monday on rumours of a clean sweep for the right and on Tuesday operators remained happy with the result.

"The markets have got much of what they wanted. We have a winner. But now we need to see if we will get a government," said Banca di Roma

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Ciller urges right to unite after elections

ANKARA (Agencies) — Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on Tuesday urged the right to unite after Islamists won Istanbul and made striking gains in local elections across the country.

"The people have given the message that the right must unite," she told members of parliament (MPs) of her centre-right True Path Party (DYP), which beat the centre-right Motherland Party into second place.

"The people have clearly signalled what they want and what they don't want. The people want unity and integrity, stability, peace and solutions," Ms. Ciller declared in her first public comment since Sunday's municipal elections. "Ms. Ciller, facing voters for

the first time, has confounded pollsters and pundits by leading the DYP to victory.

Her personal charisma at Turkey's first woman premier and her headline on Kurdish guerrillas won over enough people to squash talk that her political career was in fatal danger.

There was no immediate reaction from Motherland leader Mesut Yilmaz to Ms. Ciller's remarks, but Hurriyet newspaper on Tuesday quoted him as saying:

"A search for a new government is not called for and Motherland is not enthusiastic. Forming a new coalition would take time and Turkey has no time to lose."

The pro-Islamic Welfare Party (RP) grabbed the most

coveted electoral prize with its win in Istanbul, Turkey's commercial capital and home to one-sixth of its 60 million people.

The RP also swept rebellious mainly Kurdish provinces in the east and southeast, in the absence of the Kurdish nationalist Democracy Party, which did not contest the elections.

With most counting complete, the RP, led by veteran politician Necmettin Erbakan, had won about 18.3 per cent of the overall vote, nearly double its total in 1989 local elections.

But Ms. Ciller's DYP, with 22.5 per cent, kept just ahead of the main opposition Motherland Party, on 21.2 per cent. The junior coalition partner, the Social Democrat

Populist Party (SHP), was the big loser with only 13.2 per cent.

Istanbul stocks fell back in quiet early trading after gaining five per cent on Monday on relief that Ms. Ciller would not be forced into an early general election. Near the end of the session the 69-share index had dropped 446 points to 13,768.

Brokers said the market was waiting for news of an austerity package planned by Ms. Ciller to tackle Turkey's runaway public deficits and inflation, now at an annual 73 per cent.

Overnight lira interbank rates remained as high as 1,000 per cent, but the lira came

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Panic in Istanbul's night-life area, page 10

King attends military festivities

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday attended a celebration organised by the Prince Hamzeh Ben Al Hussein Battalion to mark its anniversary and His Royal Highness Prince Hamzeh's birthday. King Hussein was received at the celebration site by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Abdul Hafez Miral, the battalion's commander and other senior army officers.

The celebration included military exercises, cultural shows and the traditional dances. At the end of the ceremony, the commander of the battalion presented King Hussein and Prince



Hamzeh with token gifts. In addition to Prince Hamzeh, King Hussein was accompanied to the celebration by His Royal Highness Prince Hashem Ben Al Hussein and Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker.

Israelis kill 1, injure 60 in escalated bloodshed

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Troops shot dead at least one Palestinian and wounded 61 others when violence erupted across the occupied territories on Tuesday after the killing of six Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) activists, Palestinian sources said.

As the fighting raged on, PLO and Israeli negotiators met in Cairo to discuss security plans for Palestinians in Hebron, where dozens of worshippers were killed by a Jewish gunman last month (see separate story).

Clashes erupted across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as Palestinians protested Monday's killing by an army under-

cover unit of six members of the Hawks, the armed wing of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

A soldier perched on a rooftop shot dead Omar Awad Al Qabani, in the Gaza refugee camp of Bureij.

Troops shot and wounded 22 other Palestinians on the Gaza Strip, 10 of them when violence broke out during a march by 2,000 demonstrators called by Fatah, the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The protesters set off from Shatti refugee camp and marched to the Sheikh Radwan army camp, where they threw stones at troops who returned

fire. The exchange also left a freelance German photographer Kai Vonden Weidenhofer wounded.

On the West Bank, troops shot and wounded 27 other Palestinians in Nablus, eight in Ramallah and one in Bethlehem.

Fatah also called a three-day general strike following what the PLO branded "a new massacre" following the Hebron killings.

Israel says the six Hawks were armed when they were gunned down. Palestinian witnesses said they were unarmed and peacefully handing out

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Balawi briefs Majali, says no dispute

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official on Tuesday briefed Jordanian officials on the status of the PLO's negotiations with Israel on security arrangements for Palestinians in the occupied territories following the Feb. 25 massacre in Hebron and said afterwards there were no differences between Jordan and the organisation.

Hakam Balawi, the PLO's representative to Tunisia, briefed Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on PLO-Israeli contacts and related developments in the Middle East peace process following the adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolution 904.

While the resolution cleared the way for a possible resumption of Middle East peace talks by condemning the Hebron massacre and calling for international protection for the Palestinian people living under occupation, it also signalled a possible shift in the U.S. stand towards Jerusalem.

U.S. President Bill Clinton has denied that there was any such shift, and senior Washington officials say that the U.S. refusal to endorse the Holy City's status as occupied territory stemmed from a desire not

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PLO meets Israelis 'to receive answers'

CAIRO (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israeli negotiators reopened talks Tuesday aimed at ensuring security for Palestinians as killings of six Palestinians by Israel's army set off renewed violence in the occupied territories.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat threatened to scrap the session because of the slayings, but Palestinians here and at PLO headquarters in Tunis said talks began in secret.

Initial meetings began at midday between the two chief delegates, the PLO's Nabil Shaath and Israeli Major General Amnon Shabak, Palestinian sources said.

In Tunis, officials said Mr. Arafat authorised the meeting to judge whether to restart overall talks on Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of

Jericho. Those talks were halted by a Jewish settler's massacre of dozens of Palestinians in a Hebron mosque Feb. 25.

Abbas Zaki, a member of the central committee of Mr. Arafat's Fatah faction, said the Palestinians want Israel's answers on how many foreign observers and Palestinian police will be allowed as a security force in Hebron.

"The Palestinians want guarantees from the Israelis when it comes to the security and protection of Palestinian people," he told the Associated Press by telephone from PLO headquarters in Tunis.

Israel has agreed in principle to posting international observers in Hebron, but it is arguing for a force in the dozens, while the PLO wants up to 200.

One Palestinian source said

that if agreement is reached on the Hebron issue, the negotiators could move quickly to discussing the Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and Jericho that was outlined in the Israel-PLO accord signed last Sept. 13.

Mr. Arafat's office in Tunis said a meeting would not count as talks or negotiations.

"(It) is not negotiations, it is not discussions, it is a very simple act of receiving answers from the Israeli government," PLO adviser Marwan Kanafani told Reuters.

The Israeli delegation had waited at the Cairo hotel where the talks were meant to start but the Palestinians did not arrive. About an hour and half later they left by a back door.

The Israeli delegation had come to finish off talks on protecting Palestinians in Heb-

ron.

Dr. Shaath described Monday's killings as "cold-blooded murder." In Tunis Mr. Arafat said a secret organisation linking the Israeli army and Jewish settlers was trying to sabotage the peace process.

Dr. Shaath earlier said: "Every time we come close in our negotiations, elements from the Israeli army perpetrate a major crime, such as what happened in Gaza last night. It is obvious that there are people in the Israeli army who plan not only to kill the best of our youth but also to kill the peace process."

Another PLO official told Reuters that if talks stalled the PLO wanted Israel's response on three points on Hebron — the size of a Palestinian police force and of a foreign observer mission and the role and the nationality of the monitors.

7-month-old breakthrough finds PLO leaders fighting not to lose legitimacy

By Lamis Andoni

WHEN The Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) declaration of principles (DoP) was signed on Sept. 13, it was hailed as a historic breakthrough that essentially preempted the PLO from demise. Seven months later, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations are seriously threatening to deal a fatal blow to the PLO leadership's legitimacy among its own constituency.

As the situation stands, any decision that PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat takes could be detrimental to the PLO status as he is effectively forced to choose between preserving his constituency and between international recognition — namely by the U.S. and Israel.

Judging by reports and contacts with PLO officials in Tunis, Mr. Arafat is inclined to take the risk of accepting a compromise that fall far short of the minimal requirements to ease a volatile situation in the hope that the mood will shift by speeding up the

Palestinian autonomy agreement.

Mr. Arafat, who is said to believe that the PLO negotiating standing was boosted as flows of American and Israeli envoys continue to Tunis, sees an opportunity in the acceleration of Israeli withdrawal from Jericho and Gaza to reestablish some of the terms for negotiations.

But the Palestinian-Israeli talks have not fundamentally changed the terms of the talks — Mr. Arafat appears to have accepted to shelve the crucial issue of Israeli settlements and the security guarantees that Israel offered to do not ensure protection for the Palestinians.

Furthermore, the PLO has failed to use the United Nations Security Council Resolution 904 that reaffirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to all the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem to assert the urgency of confidence-building measures on Israel's part as a prerequisite for the continuity of the peace process.

Thus in retrospect the U.S. and Israel have been able practically to reduce Resolution 904 to a negotiating table without binding Israel to any of the responsibilities entailed in the resolution.

Instead the PLO had to drop its initial demands for full-fledged international protection for the Palestinians, disarming the settlers and evacuation of settlers from the center of Hebron in return for a token foreign observers unit and to the deployment of Palestinian police while the Israeli army retains the final upper hand.

ANALYSIS

Mr. Arafat's acceptance of such a compromise, as many PLO officials fear, could only reinforce the Israeli position dealing a serious blow to the PLO in the occupied territories.

The massacre by an Israeli settler of dozens of Palestinians on Feb. 25, and the Israeli clampdown that followed have tragically under-

scored the shortcomings of both the Israeli-Palestinian pact and flawed the PLO performance at the talks and Cairo.

Although the Hebron massacre has been a sharp turning point that stalled the talks, the peace process — at least regarding the Palestinian issue — was already foundering and there were no signs of change on the ground.

As early as January the mood was already shifting in the West Bank and Gaza as euphoria was replaced by bitterness and cynicism. The PLO was already losing its credibility among many people in Gaza and the West Bank.

The massacre and the Israeli clampdown have underscored and pushed to the surface the implications of a flawed agreement and a faltering Palestinian performance at the negotiating table.

The points which were either postponed or simply ignored by the agreement

(Continued on page 5)

News ban raises fears for Lebanon press freedoms

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese television and radio chiefs, shocked by a ban on their news bulletins, say they believe the government's promise that it is temporary but they will watch to see that totalitarian tendencies do not take hold.

Arguing that civil peace was at stake, the Syrian-backed government last week ordered Lebanon's 50 private television and 100 radio stations to halt newscasts and political programmes pending a law organising the audiovisual media.

Some newspapers immediately condemned the ban as an ominous reversal of Lebanon's tradition of press and media freedoms unmatched in the Arab World.

"This government is moving Lebanon towards police rule," Al Diyar daily said. "We ask Prime Minister (Rafik) Al Hariri, has he come with his government to put Lebanon in a big prison?"

"The government was due to study the draft of an audiovisual media law on Tuesday, but officials said privately it could take months to pass parliament and become law."

Pro-government sources said some people in the government wanted the law to impose uniform government-supervised newscasts on all radio and television stations.

The government, justified last week's move — which came hand-in-hand with a ban on the Lebanese Forces (LF), a former Christian militia — by saying several stations were playing "sectarian tunes."

The pro-government sources said the LF was trying to mount a Christian revolt against the government after several LF members were charged with bombing a church in which 10 worshippers died.

The government-owned National News Agency heightened concern by reporting that two dailies would be prosecuted for publishing false re-

ports on the interrogations of the LF members.

Newspapers are not affected by the ban. It is aimed at the scores of private radio and television stations that sprang up during the 1975-90 civil war, for which no regulatory law exists.

However, the spiritual leader of the Maronite Christians, Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, issued a solemn warning against the ban becoming permanent.

"Such a measure would lead in effect to the end of Lebanon and to wiping Lebanon from the map of the world," he said in a homily.

The National Press Syndicate called the ban a dangerous development and demanded its cancellation.

"Behind the temporary cabinet decision there are intentions to transform it into something permanent," the syndicate said.

Heads of private stations told Reuters they were respecting the ban because they were told it was temporary.

"In my opinion this ban is temporary. If it is not, then that would be tightening the noose on the reason for Lebanon's existence: freedom," said Simon Al Khazen, director of Voice of Lebanon, mouthpiece of the Christian Falange Party.

He said the 1989 Taif peace pact that ended the civil war stipulated organising the private media, not shutting it down or cutting programmes.

Information Minister Michel Samaha said that once parliament approved the audiovisual media law, private stations could resume normal broadcasts.

But a source close to the government said the law might be delayed. "It is a controversial bill so it will not get through parliament before May when parliament goes into recess for summer until October," he said.



Women and children fill containers with water in Mogadishu, where contaminated water has been one of the causes of cholera gripping the entire country (AFP photo)

Somali factions say they plan to unite in forty days

NAIROBI (R) — Rival Somali factions said on Tuesday they planned to unite within 40 days as part of a peace deal for the southern port of Kismayu and the rest of the south.

The agreement is significant in the sense that Kismayu is widely seen by U.N. officials as a flashpoint for renewed civil war in Somalia with the withdrawal this month of U.S. troops and allied contingents from U.N. peacekeeping forces.

Rival wings of the Somalia Peoples Movement (SPM) said in a joint statement their leaders had agreed to an immediate end to hostilities and a start to peace and reconciliation after talks in Nairobi.

General Adan Abdullahi Nur and Colonel Ahmad Omar Jess, chairmen of the SPM factions, said they should tour the south to kick off reconciliation and set up a mechanism to unify their movements.

Forces under Col. Jess and warlord General Mohammad Said Hersi "Morgan" have repeatedly fought for control of Kismayu, the gateway to the fertile south, since Somalia's civil war erupted in 1991.

Gen. Morgan was not present at Tuesday news conference but Gen. Nur said he fully backed the peace pact signed on Monday, four days after an agreement between Somalia's most powerful warlords.

Gen. Nur, known as "Gabyow" (the poet), and Col. Jess said they would set up a reconciliation committee of their Absame sub-clan and appealed to all communities to oppose any action endangering the peace process.

The representatives appealed to all communities to avoid and jointly oppose any action that jeopardised the peace process.

They also called for a conference to discuss ways of setting up administrative units in the southern Somalia region and arranging reconciliation with other Somali clans or groups.

The Kismayu agreement was reached after two weeks of talks in Nairobi sponsored by the U.N. Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM).

Col. Jess said a meeting of southern faction chiefs called for April 8 was too soon as they needed time to narrow differences.

Mohammad Farah Aided and Ali Mahdi Mohammad, the two most powerful warlords in Somalia, agreed on Thursday to a ceasefire across the country to end fighting since the fall of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in 1991.

They scheduled a reconciliation conference for May 15 in Mogadishu to elect a president and set up a new government.

Hostages 'treated well'

An Australian and a Kenyan freed after 15 days in captivity said they feared constantly for their lives while they were in the hands of an unstable Somali kidnap gang.

Wayne Hargreaves, 47, and John Warji, 32, employees of an Australian catering firm that provides meals to U.N. personnel in Somalia, were released unharmed Sunday night after 15 days of negotiations.

"We were in a desperate situation. The group was destabilised and didn't agree for one that we would survive another day," Mr. Hargreaves, an Australian, told reporters Monday.

"I definitely regard this as the first day of a new life," he said.

David Morris, of Morris Catering, said he gave the kidnapers seven 50 kilogramme sacks of rice, 18 one-kilogramme drums of cooking oil, some corned beef and some sugar.

Mr. Hargreaves said the kidnapers, who were armed with rocket-propelled grenades, machine-guns and assault rifles, had at first demanded \$2 million in ransom. Over time the demands dropped to \$5,000 and then to \$2,000 before the bargain was reached for the food.

China opposes sanctions on Libya

BEIJING (R) — China said on Tuesday it opposed U.N. sanctions imposed on Libya because of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, underlining its opposition to any U.N. sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear programme.

Foreign Minister Qian Qichen told visiting Libyan Foreign Minister Omar Mustafa Al Montasser that Beijing, "understands and sympathises with Libya" over the sanctions issue, the official Xinhua news agency said.

"We disapprove of imposing sanctions on Libya, let alone imposing severe sanctions," Mr. Qian was quoted as saying.

China's position on U.N. sanctions has come under scrutiny as the crisis continues over North Korea's refusal to allow unfettered international inspection of its nuclear programme.

Beijing, one of five veto-holding permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, abstained from the 1992 vote that imposed sanctions on Libya.

These were in retaliation for Tripoli's refusal to hand over the two men accused of involvement with the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland. The crash killed 270 people.

Western countries, led by the United States, have brought up the possibility of sanctions against North Korea unless it opens its nuclear facilities to full inspection.

China has resisted this call. During an official visit this week, South Korean President Kim Young-Sam was told by top Chinese leaders that negotiations was the only way to resolve the impasse over North Korea's nuclear sites, which the West suspects are being used to develop atomic bombs.

Mr. Qian told Mr. Montasser that Beijing felt the U.N. sanctions against Libya had been counterproductive.

"Sanctions against Libya have brought about pains to the Libyan people and caused difficulties for Libya's neighbouring countries and other countries concerned, thus intensifying the already strained regional situation," Xinhua added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PLO wants elected W. Bank mayors reinstated

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A former Arab mayor said on Monday the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) wants Israel to reinstate West Bank municipal councils it deposited more than 10 years ago. Such a move would facilitate an agreement on protecting Palestinians in Hebron after a massacre in a mosque last month. Former Hebron Mayor Mustafa Natsheh said PLO officials told him the subject was raised in talks on providing security for Hebron's 110,000 Palestinians. "They told me this is one of the proposals which is the return of all of the deposited municipal councils, starting with Hebron," Natsheh said. Mr. Natsheh said he was ready to return to the municipality. An aide to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin confirmed the subject was raised by the PLO but refused to comment. Israel deposited the elected pro-PLO municipal councils in 1982 after they refused to go along with Israeli plans to establish self-rule in the occupied territories under the Egypt-Israel Camp David peace accord. The elected mayors were initially replaced by Israeli army officers and later Israel appointed local councils despite PLO objections.

Egyptians say police killed civilians

CAIRO (AP) — A member of Egypt's parliament was sent to a village near Assiut on Monday to calm angry complaints that police accidentally killed civilians during a shootout with extremists the night before. Four people were slain when police opened fire on a taxi just after four policemen, including three officers, were wounded by gunshots in the village of Ghanayem, 320 kilometres south of Cairo. The villagers charge that the taxi had nothing to do with the attack on police. But officials said one of the passengers was an armed extremist who had opened fire on officers approaching to check the car near village police headquarters. Assiut and surrounding villages have been a centre of attacks by radicals, who often target police in their campaign to try to overthrow Egypt's secular government and replace it with Islamic rule. Parliament Member Musa Abdul Khalek met with people in Ghanayem on Monday. Witnesses said the villagers argued police opened fire on the taxi because it approached immediately after the attack. The Christian driver, Zaghouli Hana, was killed along with a three passengers — a woman university student, a teacher and a man identified by villagers as a peasant. The interior ministry statement insisted that the supposed peasant was a radical who opened fire on police with a pistol stolen earlier from a policeman.

Iranian police kill opium smuggler in shootout

NICOSIA (R) — Iranian police killed a drug smuggler and arrested a second after a shootout in eastern Iran, the Iranian news agency IRNA said. The smugglers shot and wounded a woman during the clash near the provincial capital Mashhad on Saturday. Police seized 81 kilogrammes of opium, 10 rifles and a pistol from the traffickers, the agency said. Iran is on a major drug trafficking route from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Europe.

Former GE executive pleads innocent

CINCINNATI (AP) — a former General Electric GE Company executive pleaded innocent Monday to federal charges that he was involved in an alleged scheme to siphon \$11 million in U.S. military aid to Israel. Herbert B. Steindler, 55, was indicted March 17 on charges of conspiracy, mail and wire fraud, money laundering, making false statements and violating the anti-bribery and records provisions of the foreign corrupt practices act. He was arraigned Monday in U.S. district court before Magistrate Robert Steinberg. GE fired Mr. Steindler in March 1991 for his alleged role in the fraud scheme with an Israeli military officer and a lawyer. Mr. Steindler was a GE international sales manager at the time. Indicted with Mr. Steindler were Rami Dotan, 49, a former Israeli brigadier general now serving a 13-year prison term in Israel, and Harold Katz, 72, the Israeli lawyer who allegedly laundered the money through European bank accounts. Mr. Dotan had been in charge of buying and maintaining aircraft engines for Israel's air force. Federal prosecutors said Monday they want Mr. Dotan and Mr. Katz brought to Cincinnati to stand trial with Mr. Steindler. The indictment charges that the money was diverted between 1984 and 1990 from defence contracts between GE and Israel. The contracts were for jet engines and related products and services.

Police arrest suspected killer of Hamdi

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian police have arrested a film impresario in connection with the killing of actress Widad Hamdi this week, Cairo newspapers said on Tuesday. The man, Matta Hanna Ghali, has confessed to police that he stabbed Hamdi dead in her Cairo flat last Friday because he was short of money and planned to rob her, they said. The killer stole 270 pounds (\$80) and a wristwatch. He could not find the actress's jewellery, they added. Hamdi, 65, specialised in playing the role of servant.

Dutch official in Gulf to build relations

KUWAIT (R) — Dutch Deputy Defence Minister Ton Frinking said on a tour of five Gulf states he was trying to strengthen relations and to assess the stability of the region. "I want to stress the interest of the Dutch government in the region," he told reporters late on Monday after meeting Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah. "I'm on a political tour. The main objective is to show the flag," said Mr. Frinking, adding "the stability of the region is a point of discussion." He said Gulf officials had a "double feeling" that the region was secure but that concerns and issues related to bigger countries in the region could arise. He declined to elaborate. He added that the Netherlands would be interested if Kuwait invited invitations to tender for the construction of naval vessels, but he had held no discussions on this subject. Diplomats say Kuwait is considering buying eight fast patrol boats and six missile attack boats among other weapons. Kuwaiti officials visited the Netherlands on a world tour of shipyards last year to learn about the ability of various countries to provide naval equipment.

U.S. military formally concludes Somalia role

ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE (R) — The U.S. military formally ended its role in Somalia at a ceremony Monday for the commanders of the operation.

An air force C-141 Starlifter carrying Major-General Thomas Montgomery, commander of U.S. forces in Somalia, and his staff pulled up to a hangar for the ceremony with Pentagon officials.

Gen. Montgomery and his staff, still wearing their desert camouflage fatigues, marched past an honour guard at this air force base outside Washington for the ceremony.

"Most of us left Somalia with mixed emotions," Gen. Montgomery said. "But we are proud of what we accomplished."

He said the U.S. forces and forces from other countries still in Somalia have given the Somali "a chance to recover from a disastrous civil war and a terrible famine."

"Hundreds of thousands of Somalis are alive because we came to their rescue," the general said. "We have given them a chance to build a new future for themselves."

Among the officials present to welcome back Gen. Montgomery and his staff of about 20 officers were General John Shalikshvili, chairman of the

U.S. military Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Under-Secretary of Defence John Deutch.

The ceremony formally ended U.S. military involvement in Somalia, which began nearly 16 months ago in December 1992 when U.S. Marines went ashore under the glare of television camera lights.

It began as a U.S. operation only to aid food distribution to starving Somalis but later turned into a hunt for Somali warlord Mohammad Farah Aided after his militia attacked and killed U.N. peacekeepers.

The fiercest battle of the operation last October killed 18 American soldiers and wounded 75. The body of one of the dead Americans was dragged through the streets of the Somali capital Mogadishu.

Under pressure from Congress, President Bill Clinton promised to have all American forces out of Somalia by the end of March. The pullout was completed Friday.

Thirty U.S. soldiers were killed in the operation, plus 14 who died in non-battle accidents. A total of 175 were injured.

The only U.S. soldiers left in Somalia now are 50 marines guarding the American embassy and 13 army logistics specialists.

Israelis likely to face cool welcome in Gulf

DUBAI (R) — An Israeli minister who will visit the Gulf next month for the first time since the Jewish state was created is likely to get a cool welcome, especially in the wake of the Hebron massacre, diplomats say.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said on Monday he would head Israel's team to the first multilateral Middle East peace talks to be held in a Gulf Arab state.

Western diplomats said the meetings in the Omani capital Muscat of the group handling issues related to water in multilateral negotiations launched after the Madrid peace conference would be held from April 17-20.

Israel would also be invited to a meeting on April 5 of experts to prepare for the water forum and to a multilateral forum on arms control due in the Qatari capital Doha in May, they added.

"Beilin and the other Israelis will be received courteously. But they should not expect a hero's welcome. Anti-Israeli sentiment is running very high and it has not been helped by

Hebron," one diplomat said.

The Gulf states agreed to host the two forums long before the massacre in Hebron last month in which dozens of Palestinians were killed when an Israeli settler opened fire on worshippers at a mosque during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The diplomats said Oman and Qatar had probably been chosen because they were small, tightly-controlled societies relatively remote from the Arab-Israeli conflict where the risk of overt anti-Israeli outbursts was minimal.

Foreign ministers of the six-month Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are to meet in the Saudi capital Riyadh on Sunday to coordinate their position ahead of the multilateral meetings.

GCC sources said senior officials met in Riyadh on Saturday to prepare for discussion by the ministers from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Diplomats and officials said Oman and Qatar were likely to get backing from the whole

group for agreeing to act as hosts.

The GCC was represented at Madrid by its then secretary general, Abdullah Bishara. It has played a role in the multilateral meetings for the past two years and has repeatedly emphasised its support for the Middle East peace process.

The talks have made scant progress in the absence of a breakthrough at parallel direct negotiations between Israel and neighbours Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians. The bilateral talks have been stalled since the massacre.

The diplomats said tight security could help keep Mr. Beilin and other Israelis attending the multilateral talks away from potentially hostile audiences.

Qatar is the only Gulf state to have held public talks with Israel. The Gulf position is that normal ties with the Jewish state are possible only when it establishes peace with its immediate neighbours and settles vexed issues such as the status of Jerusalem.

They said Gulf states insisted on maintaining the economic boycott of Israel despite heavy pressure from American allies which have pressed for gestures of goodwill towards Israel.

"They will have shown enough goodwill by playing host to an Israeli minister in public," one diplomat said.

Arab League foreign ministers ignored at a meeting in Cairo that ended on Sunday requests from Washington and Bonn to ease the boycott.

They had been asked to abandon the so-called secondary and tertiary boycotts of non-Israeli firms that trade with Israel.

Oman's minister of state for foreign affairs, Youssef Ben Alawi Ben Abdullah, who will host the Muscat multilateral talks, told reporters after the Cairo meeting there was no wish to lift the direct boycott at the present.

But he said Oman believed each country should make its own decision on the secondary and tertiary boycotts in the light of its development needs.

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30	Ordy
18:00	N.B.A. sport
19:00	News in French
19:15	Le Journal De L'Histoire
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	Too Close for Comfort
21:15	African Nations Cup Match
22:00	News in English
22:30	Feature Film: "Rocket Gibraltar"

PRAYER TIMES

04:05	Fajr
05:23	Sunrise
11:00	Dhuhr
15:11	Asr
17:56	Maghreb
19:14	Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetish, Tel. 610740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 637285
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661756
Teravants Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543
Assyrian Catholic Church Tel. 713131
Assyrian Orthodox Church Tel. 713561
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 717151
Assyrian International Church Tel. 625236
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures will drop significantly, clouds will build up accompanied with scattered showers and winds becoming northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, scattered showers are expected with winds becoming northerly moderate and seas calm.

	Min/Max.	Temp.
Amman	9 / 18	15/21
Aqaba	15 / 21	9 / 21
Jordan Valley	14 / 25	

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDER

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 24, Aqaba 31, Humidity readings: Amman 20 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN: Dr. Farouq Nour 786880
Dr. Rami Zaidoun 888885
Dr. Jihad Zaidoun 881148
Dr. Bahjat Badr 849362
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asana pharmacy 637025
Haitrouk pharmacy 626772
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 649445
Shmoosani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 626772
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID: Dr. Mohammad Al Khalil 273099
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA: Dr. Fawaz Hamdallah 903644
Khalil pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Emergency 630341
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661776
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 610230
General Amman Telephone Repair 623101
Abdali Telephone Repair 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 06-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 06-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre 813813/22
Khald Maternity J. Amn 642316/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mahas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsan 664171/4
Shamsan Hospital 771013
University Hospital 845845
Al-Mushar Hospital 667271/7
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Madun 771013
Al-Basir, J. Ashrafiah 775111/26
Army, Sharika 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA: Zarga Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarga National Hospital (09)905632
Ibn Nafis Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID: Princess Beasm Hospital (02)73555
Abdali Hospital (02)72225
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)247100
Aqaba: Princess Haya Hospital (03)614111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (09)532005, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

	Aqaba (RJ)	Jeddah (RJ)	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)	Damascus (RJ)	Larnaca (RJ)	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)	London (RJ)	Istanbul (RJ)	Brussels, Paris (RJ)	Madrid, Geneva (RJ)	Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)	Rome (RJ)	Toronto, Montreal (RJ)	Rome (RJ)	Jeddah (RJ)	Aqaba (RJ)	Nicosia (RJ)
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Other Flights (Terminal 2)

04:55	Beirut, Paris (AF)
06:15	Beirut (ME)
06:25	Cairo (MS)
06:30	Rome (AZ)
06:45	Larnaca (CY)
07:00	Satna (YU)
07:10	Jeddah (SA)
07:20	Abu Dhabi (GF)
07:30	Karachi, Islamabad (PI)
07:40	Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

	Aqaba (RJ)	Jeddah (RJ)	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)	Damascus (RJ)	Larnaca (RJ)	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)	London (RJ)	Istanbul (RJ)	Brussels, Paris (RJ)	Madrid, Geneva (RJ)	Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)	Rome (RJ)	Toronto, Montreal (RJ)	Rome (RJ)	Jeddah (RJ)	Aqaba (RJ)	Nicosia (RJ)
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07:00	Satna (YU)
07:10	Jeddah (SA)
07:20	Abu Dhabi (GF)
07:30	Karachi, Islamabad (PI)
07:40	Amsterdam (KL)

HUAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:30 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	550 / 650
Banana	600 / 680
Banana (Mukannam)	620
Cabbage	240 / 120
Carrot	100 / 100
Cauliflower	100 / 100
Clementine	240 / 200
Cucumbers (large)	130 / 80
Cucumbers (small)	260 / 180
Eggplant	100 / 100
Garlic	100 / 100
Grape Fruit	100 / 100
Green beans	240 / 160
Lemon	300 / 300
Marrow (large)	160 / 100
Marrow (small)	240 / 180
Olives (green)	700 / 500
Onion (dry)	500 / 400
Onion (green)	

Anani says government's respect for professional unions does not exempt them from abiding by the Constitution

AMMAN (Petra) — Information Minister Jawad Anani Tuesday denied reports in the local press and statements issued by the professional unions that the government was trying to weaken the unions or acting against their interests.

Speaking at a press conference held at the Prime Ministry, Dr. Anani said that the government respects the professional unions and their institutions and members, and appreciates their role in serving the Jordanian society.

But that does not mean that differences between a government ministry and the unions can never emerge in the course of their normal dealings with one another, said Dr. Anani.

"A state of the law normally resorts to legal and constitutional procedures in order to settle differences," added the minister.

On the whole, he said, the government expects from the professional unions to practise a constructive role in all matters, adding that differences of views with the government do not mean that democracy in Jordan is in danger.

"We hope to further deepen the role the unions play, to help them construct society and help the country confront and deal with challenges in the future," said the minister who added that these issues, and others, were reviewed by the Council of Ministers at Tuesday's session.

The government, stressed Dr. Anani, has no differences whatsoever, with the profes-

sional unions and does not wish to reduce their importance or expose them to any danger, but "in all cases we would always resort to legal procedures to settle differences."

Referring to His Majesty King Hussein's donation of JD 60,000 to install dialysis units at Jerash and Madaba hospitals, the minister noted that the government was determined to back the efforts of the Friends of the Kidney Patients Society.

He added that the society has opened the door for donations from any source because it requires more funds to provide for the treatment of the needy patients. The minister said that the monthly cost of treatment by dialysis is estimated at JD 1,000 and there-

fore the government hopes the public will offer generous donations to the society.

According to Dr. Anani, the Cabinet also discussed public administration affairs, noting that some of the government buildings do not serve their purpose and the government was making arrangements to set up new, properly designed government buildings.

Another question discussed by the Cabinet Tuesday was providing homes for government employees in remote regions. He said the minister of public works has been requested to conduct a study of this issue and supply the government with designs for homes that can be set up in remote regions in two months' time.

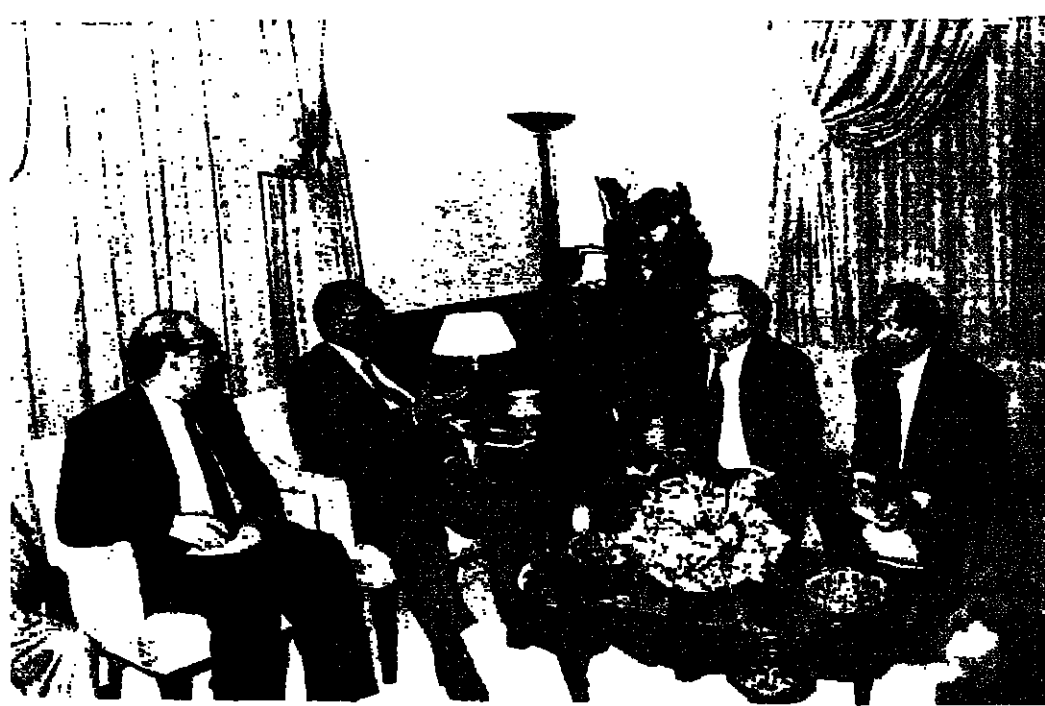
Premier, visiting German labour minister review common unemployment problems

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and visiting German Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Norbert Blum Tuesday discussed cooperation in solving unemployment issues and social affairs in both countries.

The German minister said at the meeting held at the Prime Ministry, that Germany was facing unemployment, especially among recent university graduates, but he added that his country was willing to cooperate with Jordan in finding solutions to labour-related problems.

Both the prime minister and Mr. Blum stressed their countries' desire to collaborate on all levels and in various fields.

Thanking Germany for its continued assistance to Jordan, Dr. Majali said that he hoped that the German government would now help the Kingdom in promoting its vocational training programmes to help it stem unemployment, as well as assist in carrying out more development projects that can provide jobs.



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Tuesday receives visiting German Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Norbert Blum (Petra photo)

Jordan, Dr. Majali said, is in need of assistance to solve its water-related problems in view of the growth in its population.

He said the Kingdom was looking forward to the achievement of a just and durable peace, adding that Jordan hopes Germany would help in this area.

Dr. Majali also said Jordan seeks Germany's support in ending the siege imposed on the port of Aqaba over the past three years, because it has been causing untold sufferings and hurting the national economy.

The prime minister added that Jordan has borne the brunt of the consequences of the Gulf war, and its economy has been severely hit by the U.N.-imposed sanctions on Iraq and the siege on Aqaba.

Speaking during a visit to the Schneller Vocational Training Centre near Russeifa, Mr. Blum said crafts and manual

and vocational work were more important to the national economy than academic education, and constitute the main tool for economic success.

The German minister, who earlier held talks with several Jordanian ministers, was accompanied on a tour of the workshops at the Schneller centre, which offers training in carpentry and auto-maintenance and trains future blacksmiths.

The minister took part in some of the students' activities and listened to an Arabic language lesson.

Centre Director Sami Habihi explained to Mr. Blum that the school, which was inaugurated by His Majesty King Hussein in 1966, offers training to 250 orphaned students between the ages of six and 21.

Mr. Habihi also outlined the various programmes and development stages of the school which has been the fruit of

joint Jordanian-German cooperation in labour affairs.

The Schneller institution of Germany first set up a school in Jerusalem in 1860 and later a primary school near Ramleh in now occupied Palestine.

The Jerusalem school was a full secondary and industrial school; the one near Ramleh offered primary education and was adjoined by a large farm.

The Schneller School in Amman, which is now run by the Anglican Church and community, offers academic as well as vocational training to students. Germany had provided instructors at the start and they remained until 1988; the training is now conducted by Arab instructors.

According to Mr. Habihi, the students receive an academic education until the 10th grade and later they follow a vocational training curriculum.

Mr. Blum discussed German-Jordanian cooperation in labour matters earlier with Minister of Labour Khaled Ghazawi, and said he exchanged views with his counterpart on matters related to organising the local labour market and the German experience in this area.

Also the two ministers discussed vocational training and ways to develop human resources and workers skills.

Mr. Blum also met with Minister of Youth Abdullah Owaidat, with whom he discussed prospects of cooperation in youth and sports affairs.

Mr. Owaidat reviewed the ministry's plans for developing school sports, physical activities for handicapped youth and youth clubs in Jordan.

Later, Mr. Blum met with Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Walid Asfour to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Princess Basma explains QAF strategy to wife of German official

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Tuesday received Marita Blum, wife of Norbert Blum, German minister of labour, at the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF), according to a QAF statement.

Mrs. Blum, who was accompanied by Mrs. Khaled Ghazawi, wife of the minister of labour, as well as Mrs. Heinrich Reiners, wife of the German ambassador to Jordan, was briefed about social development in Jordan and the role QAF plays in economic and social development in needy rural and urban areas.

The visitors were also briefed on the role of the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW), which is hosted by QAF, as a national policy forum for women's issues.

According to QAF, JNCW supervises the implementation of the National Strategy for Women which was ratified in 1993, in addition to preparing for the 1995 International Women's Conference in Beijing.

Princess Basma explained to the visitors the strategy of QAF which aims at involving women in community life through projects that gener-



Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Tuesday briefs Marita Blum, wife of visiting German Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Norbert Blum, at QAF headquarters (Petra photo)

ate income.

The implementation of these projects is a proven way to advance the status of women any community, said the Princess.

Prior to arriving at QAF headquarters, the visitors toured the Nuzha Social Development Centre that was established by QAF and is

run by the Jordanian Save the Children Fund.

Mrs. Blum commented on the efficiency of QAF's comprehensive approach which allows women to participate in a variety of educational and economic activities while at the same time offers child care, said the statement.

Mrs. Blum also said she

was impressed by QAF's strategy of combining over 15 years of experience working at the grass roots level, with the exploration of new ideas and new economic projects, and supporting smaller non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community groups to become self-sufficient.

International meeting to tackle disaster prevention

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan will host a three-day international conference on civil protection from April 3-5, to exchange information and knowledge regarding civil and environmental protection, and measures to be taken during national disasters.

Lieutenant General Afif Ghoul, director general of the Civil Defence Department (CDD) announced Tuesday.

According to Lt. Gen. Ghoul, more than 35 countries have confirmed participation in the conference, and more countries are expected to agree

to attend.

The conference, which is organised by the International Civil Protection Organisation (ICPO), will also be attended by representatives of 13 specialised international organisations, including the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Red Cross.

Lt. Gen. Ghoul, addressing reporters at a press conference at the CDD, said the United Nations has considered this decade as the decade of disaster prevention.

The opening day of the conference will be held at the Islamic Cultural Centre of the King Abdullah Mosque. Sub-

sequent sessions will be held at the Philadelphia Hotel.

The sessions will give all representatives of civil defence departments in the participating countries a chance to exchange information and knowledge, and each representative will present working papers for discussion.

The conference will be immediately followed by another meeting organised by the General Assembly of International Civil Protection Organisations.

The meeting will be attended by delegates from different parts of the world who will present working pap-

ers for discussion.

Lt. Gen. Ghoul said the CDD had recently received four ambulances, three large water tankers, and an expanded ambulance with a nine-patient capacity, and two heavy-duty cranes.

He said the new equipment will be on display at an exhibition on the sidelines of the conference at the CDD.

He said the CDD was able to purchase the equipment from a JD1.6 million grant from the Austrian government. Gen. Ghoul said this grant is part of a protocol signed between the Jordanian and the Austrian governments.

Dentists' annual meeting to centre on continuous education, surgery advances

By Jennifer Hamarneh
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Beginning today and branching over into next week, dentists, laboratory specialists, educators and some sectors of the media will be concentrating on the importance of good oral hygiene.

For the next three days, starting today, the Jordan Dentists Association (JDA) will hold its annual conference.

This year's theme is coordination and cooperation in order to develop the performance on the dental surgeon through continuous education.

JDA board member Huda Fakhouri told the Jordan Times that the lectures to be presented will cover most aspects of dental surgery, preventive medicine, and treatment. A special focus will be placed on facial and jaw surgeries.

Another category of emphasis will be incidental surgery and children's surgery. Here, modern advances in orthodontics and bridge work will be dealt with.

Other speakers will address the treatment of elderly and handicapped patients.

There will be a session conducted by dentists and laboratory specialists stressing the importance of patient referrals from dentists to laboratories in order to avoid complications, particularly in chronic cases.

Another lecture will discuss the relationship between eye diseases and dental problems.

According to ophthalmologist Sura Sabelash, the link between eye and teeth problems was made as far back as Babylonian times when King Asarhaddon complained of head and feet troubles and his physician advised him to have his teeth extracted.

Dr. Sabelash, who will review the past and present relations of eye and dental problems in her lecture to the JDA conference, explained

that the main source of sensation to the eyes comes from the trigeminal nerve which supplies sensation to the entire eye area as well as to the upper and lower jaws.

This explains some of the related symptoms affecting both the eyes and the teeth, she told the Jordan Times. She added that some symptoms of pain in the eye or the temporal area can be traced to tooth decay.

More than 40 lecturers from Jordan, other Arab states, Britain and Germany are expected to participate.

On the third and final day of the conference, a specialised workshop on X-ray procedures will be conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy. The aim of the workshop is to license dentists to use X-ray equipment.

Sameera Saquer, head of the division at the Ministry of Energy charged with licensing and inspecting all medical institutions and establishments using radiation sources, explained that the workshop is geared towards dentists who have been practising for nearly three decades, i.e., prior to laws and regulations governing the use of radiation in medicine in Jordan.

Mrs. Saquer told the Jordan Times that in order to be licensed to operate X-ray equipment, new dentists are required by law and the Code of Practice to attend a 20-hour course.

The Ministry, she said, has modified that course into the workshop to be held Friday, in order to accommodate the veteran dentists. Mrs. Saquer will be part of the lecture team at the workshop and will speak about radiation protection in dental procedures.

On the sidelines of the conference, Jordanian pharmaceutical companies and stores specialised in dentistry material and equipment will display their products at an exhibition.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has design-



A photo from an information pamphlet published by the Jordanian committee planning the activities to mark "Healthy Oral Hygiene Year"

IAF sends letter of support to N. Korea, denounces U.S. threats against Pyongyang

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Islamic Action Front (IAF) party Tuesday voiced its support for North Korea in the face of what it called U.S. arrogance and attempts to humiliate the North Korean people and tamper with their internal affairs.

In a letter addressed to President Kim Il Sung through the North Korean ambassador in Amman, the IAF denounced U.S. attempts to conduct inspections on North Korea's nuclear programme at a time when Washington continues to provide unlimited assistance to the Jewish state by helping it to build up its own nuclear arsen-

al.

The Americans continue to supply military assistance to the Israelis who continue to occupy Palestinian land and cause the dispersion of Palestinians throughout the world, said the letter.

American threats levelled against North Korea remind us of the tragedy and the sufferings of the Iraqi people who continue to endure the consequences of the unjust war waged on them and the results of the embargo on its children and women, the letter continued.

At the same time, it said, the Americans continue to pursue a policy aimed at humiliating the Iraqi people and devastat-

ing their potentials in order to prevent them from building for future generations.

American threats levelled against North Korea, which refuses to succumb to Washington's hegemony, they said, also remind them of Washington's threats against Sudan, whose people suffer as a result of an embargo imposed since the emergence of an Islamic regime in the country, said the letter.

In conjunction with the sanctions on Sudan is American continued support for the separatist movement in the South of the country a move which, the letter said, is designed to weaken the Sudanese people and keep them sub-

jected and under American control.

"While we express our total astonishment at the U.S. administration's insistence on conducting inspections on your nuclear programme through the help of the U.N. Security Council, which has become a tool in Washington's hands, we also note that the United States administration protects and enhances Israel's nuclear programme and an arsenal of hundreds of nuclear heads that perpetually threaten the Arab region's security," said the IAF.

Such practices, concluded the letter, provide a stark evidence of the United States' double standard policy.

the benefits of maintaining a healthy mouth and teeth.

The Ministry of Education is engaging the country's schools in a children's drawing and essay competition on the subject. The drawings will be put on display in the main hall of the Teachers' Club in Amman, and winners of the contest will be announced on April 7.

On April 8, Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein will launch a march to commemorate 1994 as the Year of Healthy Oral Hygiene.

Marchers will start off from the Haya Arts Centre in Shmeisani (Amman) and walk to the Orthodox Club in Abdoun, where a celebration for the participating children will be held, including music, folk dancing and other activities.

WHAT'S GOING ON

- ★ Exhibition by Syrian artists Abdul Mannan Shamma, Khaled Al Maz, and Mamdouh Kashlan at Ab'ad Art Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition of sculptures and drawings by Jordanian sculptor Samer Tabbaa. Also showing "permanent" exhibition of 54 Arab contemporary artists at Darat Al Funn of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Luweldih (Tel. 643251/2).

- ★ Exhibition entitled "Writers Do Draw" by Jamal Naji, Ibrahim Nasrallah, and Farouq Wadi at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Plastic art exhibition by Syrian artists Abdul Qader Azzouz and Aoun Al Droubi at the Phoenix Gallery for Art and Culture (Tel. 695291).

- ★ Exhibition by Iraqi artist Turki Abdullah at the Baladna Art Gallery.
- ★ Book exhibition at the Safeway International.
- ★ Art exhibition by several Iraqi and Jordanian artists at Orfali Art Gallery (Tel. 826932).

- ★ Festival of national songs at Al Hassan Ibn Tufail Auditorium at the University of Jordan at 2:00 p.m.
- ★ Drama entitled "A Very Symbolic Play" at the main theatre at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.
- ★ Drama entitled "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by the Ahliya School at the studio theatre at the Royal Cultural Centre at 6:00 p.m.

Jordan Times

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The things that Jordan knows

U.S. STATE Department spokesman Michael McCurry was only stating the obvious when he said Monday that peace is "manifestly in Jordan's interest." Not that what he said were new. Jordan has always recognised this; His Majesty King Hussein has repeatedly said that Jordan seeks peace because it is in Jordan's best interest. Only last month the King reiterated this position when he told members of the Upper House of Parliament that peace was a strategic objective for Jordan.

McCurry's remarks came during a testing session with journalists who grilled him over American policy towards Iraq, following a threat by the King that Jordan would boycott the U.S.-sponsored peace process unless the blockade on Aqaba were lifted. The session exposed the U.S. double standard when the treatment of the Iraqi people was compared to that of Haitians. Nonetheless, as far as Jordan is concerned, and as Information Minister Jawad Anani made it clear yesterday, "the whole peace process was...generated by the Gulf war." Former U.S. President George Bush had insisted during the Gulf crisis that once that conflict was settled and Iraqi occupation forces left Kuwait the Middle East peace process would start, which was the case.

Now the Jordanian people cannot understand two things: Why should the sanctions on Iraq continue? and Why is Jordan being punished? On the first count, Iraq seems to have abided by all U.N. Security Council resolutions. Rolf Ekeus, the U.N. special representative, has more or less confirmed this. When the council met last week to review the situation regarding the sanctions, it failed to issue a statement because France, China, Russia and the rest of the Council members wanted to include a sentence in the statement commending Iraq's cooperation with the Council. The U.S. and Britain refused. McCurry still insists that the sanctions will continue because Iraq "is not in full compliance" with the Security Council resolutions, though he acknowledges that the Iraqi children are suffering, an attitude that Jordanians do not understand or accept.

On the count of the Aqaba blockade, the Jordanian leadership is at pains justifying the Kingdom's cooperation with the other parties to the peace process while the main cosponsor, the U.S., is subjecting Jordan to a treatment that is hurting its economy.

We do of course appreciate the quick American response to Jordan's complaint. And we hope that the Washington meeting tomorrow will address our grievances and put an end to the blockade of Aqaba.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily commented on King Hussein's decision to link Jordan's return to the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations with the end of the three-year siege on Aqaba by saying enough is enough. We have been patient with the inspections and the harassment of international shipping operations in the Gulf of Aqaba for so long, said the paper. The inspection and the interception of ships are unjustified and carried out against a country not involved in the Gulf war in any way, said the paper. Referring to King Hussein's meeting with the ambassadors of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, the paper said that it is up to the U.N. Security Council now to decide on a halt to such a practice against a U.N. member state. The paper said that Jordan should protect its own sovereignty and national interests and cannot withstand further acts of repression and unjustified arbitrary actions on the part of any nation. Jordan, added the paper, cannot be part of a peace process in a region it is subject to repression and acts considered as violating its own sovereignty. Indeed, said the paper, the siege on Aqaba is viewed by the Kingdom as part of the ongoing pressure on the Jordanians to succumb to the will of hostile forces and to change its national stands. It said that the malpractices against Jordan, which have caused the country severe economic losses, should stop before Jordan can resume its role in the peace-making process.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily Tuesday discussed the issue of the rising numbers of road accidents in Jordan and urged the Traffic Department and the Greater Amman Municipality to take measures that would end the carnage on the streets. Reckless drivers who drive speedily, killing and maiming citizens and causing severe property damage are not worthy of being affiliated to the country and should be locked up in prisons and deprived of any driving licence, demanded Tareq Masarweh. It is not enough to talk sweetly to the drivers on the radio, cautioning them to abide by the traffic rules, but it is rather important for the concerned authorities to take drastic and prompt measures to put an end to acts of severe traffic violations by any motorist, said the writer. He said that the municipality ought to decide on fixed bus stops and draw up schedules for bus transport operations along all routes inside the city. The writer demanded that foreign help from advanced nations be enlisted to enable the local authorities to organise traffic, suggesting that recurrent violators of traffic laws be denied driving licences.



M. KAHIL

Main elements of U.S. policy in the Gulf

WASHINGTON — The United States recognises that the greatest potential danger to regional security in the Gulf lies in the threats which may come from either Iran or Iraq, and has redefined U.S. policy accordingly.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Toni G. Verstandig said March 22. "These states pose different challenges. Their threats require different policies" than those established in the Carter Doctrine of the 1980's, Ms. Verstandig said.

Speaking on "Principal Elements of United States Policy in the Gulf" before the National Security Industrial Association conference, Ms. Verstandig said Gulf geostrategic policies of the Clinton administration have been detailed by National Security Advisor Anthony Lake in his article "Confronting Backlash States," which appeared in the March/April issue of the Foreign Affairs journal.

"The basic strategic principle for the U.S. in the Gulf, as defined in the Lake article, is to protect critical American interests in the security of our friends and in the free flow of oil at stable prices," Ms. Verstandig said.

"The progress we have witnessed in the peace process, too, will contribute to the preservation of stability in the Gulf and will help erase the need of the past to balance our cooperation with Israel and with the Gulf Arab states against each other," she said. Following is the text of Ms. Verstandig's address:

I appreciate very much the opportunity to come speak to you today on a subject which is of abiding interest to all of us — the geopolitical situation in the Gulf. On Feb. 12, 1945, King Abdul Aziz Al Saud, King of Saudi Arabia, boarded a U.S. navy destroyer, the USS Murphy, and pitched his tent on the deck, where he sheltered with 48 advisors and seven sheep for the short trip from Jeddah to the Great Bitter Lake and his secret rendezvous with President Roosevelt. Although that brief meeting was focussed heavily on President Roosevelt's search for Arab acquiescence in the creation of a Jewish homeland in the Palestine, it also served to cement the U.S.-Saudi strategic alliance.

Within a few years of the meeting at Great Bitter Lake, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia signed a lease permitting U.S. use of the Dhahran airbase. The U.S. began to supply Saudi Arabia with military equipment, and an American military mission arrived to start a training programme for the Saudi armed forces. Every administration since Truman's has reiterated the commitment to protecting the integrity and independence of Saudi Arabia in one form or another. Early in 1980, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan raised the spectre that the Soviets were seeking control over the world's oil lifeline, President Carter sealed the understanding with a doctrine, asserting that the U.S. would resist any attempt by any "outside force" to "gain control of the Gulf region."

While the Carter Doctrine was aimed principally at blocking the perceived threat of Soviet expansionism, it was the reality of Iran's and Iraq's search for hegemony and regional dominance which finally drew a U.S. military response, first through protection of Kuwaiti oil shipments during the Iran-Iraq war, and then, significantly, in the coalition effort to liberate Kuwait and defeat Iraqi aggression. Today, we recognise that the greatest potential danger to regional security lies in the threat which may come from either Iran, or Iraq. These states pose different challenges. Their threats require different policies as has

been detailed by National Security Advisor Lake in his recent "Foreign Affairs" article on "Backlash States."

A U.S. strategy
The basic strategic principle for the U.S. in the Gulf, as defined in the Lake article, is to protect critical American interests in the security of our friends and in the free flow of oil at stable prices. In pursuing that balance, the U.S. concentrates on two sets of key objectives:

- limiting the ability of either Iran or Iraq to threaten regional stability; and
- bolstering the defensive capabilities of our friends in the region, individually, in tandem with their regional partners; and in concert with the U.S. and other friendly outside powers.

We have the means to check immediate, overt threats. Iraq is constrained by international sanctions which were first affirmed by the United Nations. Iran is weakened by war and cannot directly challenge the U.S. Navy. No superpower is urging either one on, or extending a protective umbrella. The situation is not static, however, and it is worth noting in some detail the major, specific elements of our Iran and Iraq policies.

Iraq
Iraq remains a regional power with a long-term potential to threaten regional and U.S. interests, but it is subject to an extensive and highly rigorous set of international restrictions on its freedom of action. Our stance towards Iraq is clear; it must fully comply with all relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions, and with the measures taken by the international coalition to enforce and monitor them. There is no convincing evidence that Saddam Hussein's regime is prepared to meet this standard. Iraq is not in full compliance with any of the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions. It continues to reject elements of U.N. Security Council Resolution 687 which ended fighting in the Gulf war, such as recognising Kuwait's borders. With such a record, Iraq's calls for negotiations to end international sanctions are at best premature.

We strongly support the continued territorial integrity and unity of Iraq. We support the Iraqi National Congress in its efforts to unify and strengthen the Iraqi opposition, and contribute to the process of bringing about a democratic, pluralistic government in Iraq which can live at peace with its neighbours and its own people. In sum, we are determined that the will of the international community, as expressed in U.N. Security Council resolutions, be enforced to ensure that Iraq can never again threaten its neighbours or pose a threat to peace.

Let me reiterate that the U.S. bears no ill will towards the Iraqi people. Saddam Hussein's brutal treatment of Iraq's civilian population is a matter of record. The Iraqi government could alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people by ceasing its repression, especially in the north against the Kurds and in the south against the Shiites, and by taking advantage of U.N. Security Council resolutions 706 and 712, which allow Iraq to sell limited quantities of oil under U.N. control to purchase food, medicine and other humanitarian goods.

Iran
As for Iran, we have deep and serious concerns about its behaviour in five areas:

- its quest for nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; and the means for their delivery;
- the continued involvement of the Iranian govern-

ment in terrorism and assassination worldwide; its support for violent opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process;

- Iran's threats and subversive activities against its neighbours; and
- its dismal human rights record at home.

Our policy is not aimed at changing the Iranian government, but at inducing Iran to change its behaviour in these areas. We seek increased international economic pressure to persuade Iran that it cannot expect to enjoy normal state to state relations so long as it violates basic standards of international behaviour. This means working with other countries to deny Iran access to technology and other means by which it can facilitate the pursuit of policies of destabilisation, terrorism, and the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, we have made clear that we do not seek the overthrow of the Iranian regime. We have made clear that we are prepared to enter into dialogue with authorised representatives of the Iranian government to discuss the differences between us.

Security cooperation
One of the clear lessons of the past decade has been that containment of regional threats by itself is not sufficient. We also need to work with our friends in the region to develop a strong regional deterrent to those who would threaten its security or stability. Many of you in the audience today have been directly involved in these efforts. Let me review with you our approach to bolstering the security of our friends in the area. The U.S. is:

- Encouraging the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to work more closely together on collective defence and security arrangements;
- helping individual GCC countries meet their legitimate defence requirements, including arms sales that increase their capabilities to conduct coordinated operations with U.S. and other GCC forces; and
- working to strengthen our own ability to act quickly in the region by maintaining strong forces there, by positioning vital equipment and material, and by concluding defence access agreements with the GCC states.

The recent reassessment of U.S. defence strategy and resources carried out by the Clinton administration — the bottom-up review — reaffirmed the importance of the Gulf and committed major U.S. defence assets to a continuing mission in the region. Our goal here is to complement, not replace, the Gulf states' own collective security efforts. We do not intend to station troops permanently anywhere in the region. Our objective is to increase regional stability, deter threats, and raise the threshold at which direct U.S. military action would be needed; that is, to reduce the likelihood that we and our allies would have to fight to repel all aggression.

We also recognise that equipment alone cannot address the requirement for regional security. Small populations, absorption issues, and the need, in this era of lower oil prices, for the Gulf states to budget carefully for their military procurement, all lead to the conclusion that the appropriate response to Gulf is a diverse one. For that reason, the U.S. particularly welcomed the decision of the GCC summit meeting in Riyadh last year to endorse a number of recommendations of the GCC defence ministers for enhanced GCC cooperation and coordination. These include, for example, joint efforts in the area of air defence command and control. We believe, and have underlined with our

friends in the area, that continued measures aimed at improved GCC cooperation form an important component of enhanced deterrence for the region.

Human rights, democracy and Islam
As a final element of our framework, I would like to say a few words about the connection we see between human rights, democracy and Islam on one hand and the implications for U.S. policy, security and stability in the region on the other hand. While the issue of political Islam is highly complex and varies considerably in each country, the U.S. approach to the phenomenon can be outlined in a few basic points:

- we do not view Islam as the next "ism" confronting the West or threatening world peace.
- we part company with those — whether their message is religious or secular — who practice terrorism, oppress minorities, preach intolerance, violate human rights, or pursue their political goals through violence.

— we do not seek a "made in America" model for other societies, but we are proud of our traditions and values and we support those in the region who seek to expand both political participation and respect for basic human rights.

— finally, we are wary of those who would use the democratic process to come to power, only to destroy that very process in order to retain power and political dominance.

The Gulf is no exception to our general interest in supporting democratisation and human rights. We have been clear in our discussions with the leaders of the Gulf states in stating our view that increased popular participation in government would enhance, not diminish, regional and internal stability and would contribute to the success of our cooperative efforts. We have welcomed the steps, albeit tentative so far, to broaden participation throughout the Gulf, whether it is the elections in Kuwait or the development of advisory councils in Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain. We look forward to continued progress along these lines.

Conclusion
Fifty years ago, when Abdul Aziz left his kingdom to travel to his meeting with President Roosevelt, the trip was conceived and executed in such secrecy that news of it left the King's enemies proclaiming that he had fled his country or been kidnapped by the Americans; members of his household were distraught, and some dressed in mourning to bewail their sudden abandonment; and it left the British community in Jeddah furious at the impudence of American intervention in a region long dominated by Britain. But today, the partnership whose foundations were laid that day has emerged at the centre of regional security relations.

Through the development of our ties to friendly states of the Gulf, we seek to ensure that those states enjoy the fruits of security and stability and that the international community preserves access to the vital natural resources of the region. The progress we have witnessed in the peace process, too, will contribute to the preservation of stability in the Gulf and will help erase the need of the past to balance our cooperation with Israel and with the Gulf Arab states against each other. Given the confluence of events, we are encouraged by our success thus far in achieving those worthy objectives and are firmly committed to pursuing them to their ultimate success in the future — United States Information Agency.

West, with few options, plays it long with N. Korea

By Patrick Worsnip
Reuter

LONDON — With very few military or economic cards in its hands, the West has decided to play it long with North Korea in a bid to defuse the dangerous dispute over Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

Like police faced with an armed hijacker, the United States and its allies are trying to hold the temperature down and keep negotiating.

This approach, they believe, offers the best hope of persuading North Korea to resume cooperating with U.N. inspectors who fear the country's Stalinist government may be developing nuclear weapons.

But, diplomats say, the crisis underlines the difficulties of dealing with an authoritarian regime that appears both unconcerned about world opinion and desperate to fend off political and economic collapse.

The crisis, simmering for three years, came back to the boil this month when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said its inspectors had been barred from taking samples at a key nuclear site and could not give North Korea a clean bill of health.

The reported lack of the cancelling of U.S.-North Korean talks, threats of war from Pyongyang, the alerting of armed forces in both Koreas, the dispatch of U.S. Patriot missiles to South Korea, and the referral of the matter to the United Nations.

But, despite talk in the West of imposing economic sanctions on North Korea, a Security Council resolution expected this week will confine itself to urging Pyongyang to permit unrestricted inspections.

It is likely to give North Korea a month to comply before further U.N. action is contemplated, diplomats say.

In part, the caution is to avoid alienating China, a long-standing friend of North Korea. Beijing has said it is against punitive measures but has not specifically stated that it would use its Security Council veto to block sanctions.

The western powers, along with Pyongyang's neighbours South Korea and Japan, also do not want to panic the isolated and jumpy North Korean leadership into some potentially catastrophic military move. North Korea has over one million men under arms.

But the softly-softly approach also reflects the outside world's lack of options, officials say.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said in a recent interview that beyond diplomacy "the alternatives... become very unattractive."

Sanctions, he told the newspaper USA Today, could be ineffective as North Korea did not depend to a great extent on imports. Cutting off energy imports, on which Pyongyang does depend, would require the collaboration of China.

"The alternative beyond

sanctions is a military alternative, our military leaders have stated while we could win that war, there would be very great damage and hundreds of thousands of casualties," Mr. Perry said.

Other countries, too, are sceptical about sanctions which took years to have much effect on countries such as Rhodesia and South Africa. Results are still awaited from the sanctions imposed two years ago on rump Yugoslavia.

North Korea has made a political philosophy out of self-reliance and is believed to import only about 10 per cent of what it consumes.

Koreans in Japan send considerable sums of money to relatives in North Korea, but shutting off that flow could be difficult, experts say.

Pyongyang has threatened that if sanctions are imposed it will withdraw from the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, a move that would reduce outside leverage still further. Under the treaty, North Korea is obliged to refrain from making nuclear weapons and to open up its facilities to inspection by the IAEA.

"The western powers, along with Pyongyang's neighbours South Korea and Japan, also do not want to panic the isolated and jumpy North Korean leadership into some potentially catastrophic military move."

As for military actions such as air strikes, the main fear is that they could trigger a massive invasion of South Korea. Western experts say that despite outdated equipment the north could attack the south with 750,000 troops in one to two days.

Western perplexity over North Korea is well exemplified by the fact that no one is sure whether Pyongyang has developed a nuclear weapon or not, although many experts believe it now has enough plutonium to do so.

Nor is there agreement over why North Korea — which denies having nuclear weapons — would want them anyway.

The main theories are that they would be an insurance policy against the collapse of the regime and enforced reunification with the south, or that the programme is a bargaining chip to be given up in return for concessions such as U.S. recognition.

"We are not prepared to bank on the second of those alternatives," one western diplomat said.

LETTERS

Clear position

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter to clarify what I said at the Third Arab Strategic Conference organised by the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies. In saying that "if Israel is such a democratic country, why don't we invite it to invade the whole of the Arab World?" I was responding sarcastically to a speaker's comment that Arabs in Israel — which the scholar described as a very democratic country — have a larger scope of political freedom than Arabs living under the rule of corrupt Arab regimes. My indignant response was merely to take the speaker's comment to its conclusion and to point out that to remedy the political conditions in our countries we do not need occupation armies (which in many Arab countries many died to get rid of) but to work on modifying our regimes, and to note that Israel's democracy is not a democracy for all its citizens, many of whom enjoy de facto but not de jure political and other rights.

Covering the conference, Suhair Obaidat in her article "Experts debate 'responsibility' for dismal state of Arab affairs," (Jordan Times, March 27, 1994) has quoted me without pointing to the context in which it was stated makes me apprehensive that the statement may be used in a context supporting Israel's democracy as "the only democracy" in the current political system in Israel to the Middle East applauds it" on the Arab region. Because I firmly maintain my views stated above, I would like my position to be clarified.

Abba Amawi, Ph.D.
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Israelis kill 1, wound 60

(Continued from page 1)

Violence flared in Jabaliya, scene of Monday's killings, when the army tried to stop Palestinians defying the curfew to attend the funerals of the six. Border guards and soldiers were beaten back by a hail of stones, Palestinians said.

Two Palestinians meanwhile attacked an Israeli with an axe, seriously wounding him on a building site at Petah Tikva, in the suburbs of Tel Aviv, police said.

The latest deaths brought to 1,257 the number of Palestinians killed by Israelis since the start of the intifada in December 1987, according to an AFP toll based on Palestinian figures.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the army's killing of six Fatah men was a "very sad event."

"The (soldiers) feared it was an attempt to ambush them, so they took the action that they did. The (troops) had no sinister intentions. It was a very sad event," Mr. Peres told reporters.

An Israeli official who demanded anonymity said the shooting of the Fatah Hawks in Gaza was a "worse case scenario" because they were not on Israel's wanted list and they belonged to Mr. Arafat's own Fatah faction. He said there were now fears that the PLO would ask new demands and slow down negotiations.

The Palestinians killed Monday night were distributing leaflets about a local dispute in Jabaliya in which they threatened to take action against Palestinian activists who harassed people in the name of Fatah.

The shooting occurred at one of the small storefronts that double as gas stations and video markets in the densely populated Gaza Strip.

About 12 Palestinians wearing camouflage fatigues, their heads wrapped in headscarves, pulled up to the shop in two cars and demanded a car to

block the road, said Mahmud Wadi, 25, who handed over his vehicle.

About seven Israeli undercover troops in two cars opened fire, killing four men instantly, Mr. Wadi said. One Hawk, a woman bystander and a boy riding a bicycle nearby were also wounded, eyewitnesses said.

Two Palestinians were shot at a point-blank range, witnesses said.

"One of the fugitives was running away when an Israeli soldier caught up with him, stood on his feet, pulled his head back by the hair and pumped at least three bullets right into his head," Mr. Wadi said.

Garage owner Mohammad Abu Aida, 25, said another man lay bleeding on the ground when an Israeli soldier walked up and shot him in the head.

Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, the housing minister and a retired army general, defended the soldiers, saying the Fatah Hawks were armed and in uniform and the soldiers could not tell if they were Islamic fundamentalists.

"I don't think there's a reason for Fatah people to run around at night in tiger uniforms and guns," he said. "I think the instinctive and necessary thing for soldiers to do is open fire."

Leaflets by Hamas and left-wing factions opposed the deployment of Palestinian police in Hebron. The measure had been demanded by the PLO in the wake of the massacre, and final details on such a deployment were expected to be worked out in Cairo talks Tuesday.

Wall slogans signed by local Fatah supporters called for armed struggle. "No peace after today," declared one in Hebron.

Fatah supporters vowed to attack Israeli soldiers in reprisal for the killing of the Fatah Hawks, saying the Fatah Hawks were deliberately targeted by soldiers.



Palestinians taking shelter behind a barricade throw stones at Israeli soldiers during a mourning held Tuesday for six Palestinians shot dead by Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip on Monday (AFP photo)

Jordan seeks speedy solution

(Continued from page 1)

Arab-Israeli peace process and the effects of the international sanctions imposed against Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 were two separate issues.

"We believe that the issue of Aqaba cannot be fully dissociated from the peace process," he said. "After all, the whole peace process was basically generated after the Gulf war. Therefore, to say that there is no link is not a view that is necessarily shared by Jordan."

Dr. Anani said a recent escalation of the interceptions and inspection procedures adopted by the American-led warships patrolling the Red Sea could not but be seen as a form of indirect pressure on Jordan to accept an Israeli demand that the Kingdom sign a peace agreement and then negotiate the terms of the accord.

"Jordan is not going to succumb to pressures of this kind," the minister said. "We want the peace process to pursue a rational path. Jordan does not need to give any further evidence to its positive attitude and its important and key role in the peace process itself."

The Jordanian position that the Kingdom's participation in the peace process hinged on a satisfactory end to its economic losses resulting from the enforcement of the sanctions did not come out of a vacuum, the minister said. He pointed out that Jordan had proposed moving inspection of Aqaba-bound ships from the Tiran Straits to the port of Aqaba but was disappointed that the proposal was not given the proper speed and attention it deserved.

The Jordanian proposal, presented during King Hussein's visit to the U.S. and meeting with President Bill Clinton at the White House in January, calls for the stationing of an independent international agency at Aqaba to check all incoming and outgoing cargo for violations of the sanctions against Iraq.

Dr. Anani suggested that Llyods Register of London could be the "neutral third party" which could undertake

this task. Llyods Register is known for its experience in inspecting international cargo upon the request of consignors and consignees to check whether consignments meet with the required technical and other specifications.

The proposal was "relatively well received" by U.S. administration officials and that Jordan had replied to some of the queries raised by Washington over the implementation of the proposal, Dr. Anani said.

"We need a third international party, without jeopardising Jordan's territorial integrity and sovereignty and with the full cooperation of Jordanian officials, to look at the goods when and where they are unloaded at the docks of Aqaba to make sure they are not contraband and in violation of the sanctions resolutions," Dr. Anani said.

Dr. Anani, who estimated that Jordan lost up to \$1.3 billion in extra freight costs alone as a result of higher charges levied by shipowners sending their vessels to and from Aqaba since the sanctions against Iraq were imposed in August 1990, noted that inspectors have not been able to find a single violation of the sanctions after checking more than 1,700 vessels.

Despite such a record, he said, Jordan continued to suffer from the modalities of the inspections. The minister said the Kingdom reserved the right to demand compensation for the losses it incurred.

"The final effect of the method of inspections on Jordan-bound ships is not justified by the method of application of sanctions against Iraq," Dr. Anani said. "Alternatives were offered and we think they should have been studied but that should not have taken so much to be finalised and approved."

"Therefore, when the number of ships that were intercepted escalated in the last month while there was a constructive proposal that has been discussed but not ratified, we had to draw a conclusion that Jordan is targeted economically and politically," said Dr. Anani.

Things came to a head on a clash when an Aqaba-bound ship was inspected four times

and still refused permission to proceed to the port last week, Dr. Anani said, referring to the German vessel Skyman, which was turned away early Monday upon its return to the Tiran Straits following a tacit agreement that its cargo would be inspected at the port.

Shipping agents said the 13,000-tonne Skyman was carrying 3,000 tonnes of general cargo for the Jordanian market.

The denial of entry to the vessel was "another example of how this whole operation is singling out Jordan as a country which is being inspected and its economy is being negatively influenced by this modus operandi," Dr. Anani said.

The information minister welcomed a statement by U.S. State Department spokesman Michael McCurry that the Jordanian proposal was under study and said Jordan hoped that "this matter will be very soon resolved."

"If that happens, then we think it would iron out a major problem which is not only affecting the Jordanian economy but also inflaming popular response to the whole situation," Dr. Anani said.

The minister was referring to a call issued by Parliament last week for the government to refuse to return to peace talks with Israel until the siege of Aqaba is lifted and the lifting is formally announced at the Security Council.

Dr. Anani said the Jordanian call for an end to the "modus operandi" of inspecting Aqaba-bound vessels was not linked to the overall sanctions against Iraq although Jordan strongly felt that the situation of the Iraqi people was worsening due to lack of enough food and medicine.

Dr. Anani also reiterated that Jordan would not accept the stationing of international forces in its territory since such a move "will be in violation of Jordan's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Asked whether Jordan would attend an April 7 round of multilateral talks on the environment, which is part of the Middle East process, Dr. Anani said: "We hope that the concerned parties will arrive at a speedy decision to solve the problem" of the siege of Aqaba.

Balawi briefs Majali, says no dispute

(Continued from page 1)

to prejudice the outcome of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the future of the occupied lands.

Jordan has criticised the PLO over the resolution saying the document was mishandled since it opened the door for the U.S. to state what could be a precedent-setting position by abstaining on the reference to Jerusalem as occupied territory.

Information Minister Jawad Al Anani, one of the officials who met on Tuesday with Mr. Balawi, who was sent there by Chairman Yasser Arafat, agreed with Mr. Balawi that there was no "fundamental rift" with the PLO.

"In essence the difference is not a political one because what is demanded first and foremost is guaranteeing the Arab rights in Jerusalem," Dr. Anani said.

Dr. Anani told reporters that Mr. Balawi had brought a "positive approach" in the sense that he reaffirmed that "Jordanian-Palestinian relations are strong and should remain strong and should not be negatively affected by a difference here or a difference there."

Dr. Anani said Jordan's foremost concern in the context of Jerusalem was to defend the Arab rights to the Holy City. "Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation should not differ over Jerusalem because we have a right in Jerusalem and we should restore them," Dr. Anani said.

"Differences in opinion sometimes lead to exaggerated political implications if those differences are overread," Dr. Anani said, emphasising the need for coordinating Jordanian and Palestinian stands towards Jerusalem. "An issue that concerns the Arabs,

Jordanians, Palestinians, Muslims and Christians..."

It was clear from Mr. Balawi's comments to reporters after the meeting that the PLO was anxious to avert any dispute with Jordan. Jordanian-PLO differences were "something of the past" he said, adding "Jordanians and Palestinians share the same objectives and goals and we are working together to achieve them."

Mr. Balawi avoided direct questions on a statement issued by the PLO early this week criticising Jordan and defending the organisation's handling of Resolution 904 at the Security Council.

Jordan said that it was a mistake to have insisted on including a reference to Jerusalem in Resolution 904 after it became clear that Washington would abstain from voting on any reference to the Holy City as occupied territories. Instead, Jordan said, the wording of the resolution could have been amended to include a general reference to the territories Israel occupied since 1967 without mentioning Jerusalem.

Jordan pointed out that for all practical and technical purposes Washington always recognised Jerusalem as occupied territory and the door would not have been open for the U.S. to signal a shift in its stand by abstaining on a specific reference to Jerusalem if it was not included in the resolution.

But the PLO stand was that every U.N. resolution issued on the Middle East since 1967 included a reference to Jerusalem and dropping such a reference would have implied an abandoning of the Palestinian claim to the city as the capital of their future independent state.

Mr. Balawi indirectly repeated the same position on

Tuesday. "Jerusalem is the capital of the independent state of Palestine," he told reporters. "At the same time it is also an issue of concern for Arabs, Muslims as well as Christians."

The PLO official looked visibly uncomfortable answering repeated questions from journalists focusing on the theme of Jerusalem and the restoration of holy shrines there.

The question of restoring holy shrines in Jerusalem was raised when last week's PLO statement specifically referred to Saudi Arabia's "contribution to repairing and maintaining" them but did not contain any reference to Jordan, which continues to be the guardian of the Muslim shrines in the Holy City despite its severance of legal and administrative links with the occupied territories in 1988.

Asked what the PLO's stand was towards the restoration of holy sites, Mr. Balawi skirted a direct answer and said: "Any development of any sites in the occupied territories is not different from developing any sites elsewhere in Palestine or in Jordan... Karak, Maan, Qalqilya, Gaza or Nabulus..."

Answering other questions, Mr. Balawi said he briefed the Jordanian government on the status of negotiations with Israel "following the massacre in Hebron and the adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolution 904."

He stressed that the talks that the PLO launched with Israel after Resolution 904 was adopted were not a continuation of the negotiations on self-rule as envisaged in the Sept. 13 Israel-PLO accord but covered only "security arrangements for the Palestinians living under occupation."

If these talks produced a satisfactory arrangement, he said, the PLO would resume the self-rule negotiations.

Jordan condemns Israeli violence

(Continued from page 1)

nearly 20 Palestinians during a protest against Israeli seizures of Arab lands.

"The day reminds us of the arbitrary and inhuman means of the Israeli authorities which are not conducive to achieving peace in the region," Dr. Anani said. "We would like to commemorate Land Day to confirm Jordan's belief that peace will never prevail in the region unless a just and comprehensive solution is achieved and Israel withdraws from all the occupied Arab territories."

Dr. Anani said the Israeli violence against Palestinians should also be seen together with "the pressures that Jordan

is also exposed to."

The net picture that emerges, he said, "is that there is a clear-cut intention to undermine the Arab role in pursuing a just and comprehensive peace."

"The Jordanian cabinet denounces the continued spilling of blood in the occupied territories. We believe that we should pursue peace until the Palestinians achieve their full legitimate rights on their own soil and land."

Dr. Anani also warned Israel. "We want to make our position clear that the cause of peace cannot be reflected by more killings or sending armed soldiers to kill innocent civilians," he said.

PLO fighting to retain legitimacy

(Continued from page 1)

have proved to pose a serious obstacle to any tangible changes on the ground that could ease Israeli control — let alone pave the way for smooth transfer to a Palestinian authority.

The most immediately felt implication in the West Bank and Gaza was the absence of any confidence building measures on the part of the Israelis which could have been crucial to the creation of a conducive atmosphere to peace.

For two years before the signing of the DoP, Palestinian negotiators have struggled in Washington to get Israel to abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention, or at least to adopt a number of measures based on international law stipulating protection of people under occupation.

The DoP had no reference to the Geneva convention or any kind of Israeli commitment to halt its restrictive measures, that essentially conflicts with the Geneva conventions.

Consequently, as negotiations were going on, Israel had a relatively free hand imposing restrictions on the movement of people across the West Bank and Gaza, passes were still needed for men under forty to enter East Jerusalem, the main entrances to the refugees camps were blocked and Israeli soldiers practically controlled life in the squalid shantytowns through their look out posts — and all other forms of human rights violations continued.

The number one issue for people under occupation, which they saw as an indicator of the seriousness of the process, was the release of Palestinian prisoners.

But as talks proceeded,

what should have been prerequisite steps for building a constituency for peace; became negotiating bargaining chips that Israel effectively used in Cairo and Taba.

By Feb. 25, Israel had only agreed to release a certain category of prisoners — mainly the ones whose terms were about to end and had refused to release prisoners who belong to groups that oppose the DoP.

On the eve of massacre, tension was already high in both Hebron and Gaza, which were placed under night curfew, starting from seven p.m. and for Palestinian activists that situation was on the verge of explosion, especially if the leadership accepted the Israeli distinction between prisoners who support the DoP and those in the opposition.

Hamas in particular was becoming more active in Hebron, and was rapidly gaining ground as Palestinians there were contrasting the Islamic Resistance Movement against the Israeli occupation with the apparent compromising PLO position.

The (Feb. 5) Cairo agreement had only aggravated an already volatile situation. Again the PLO leadership seemed to accept the Israeli concept and definition of security without easing its control or practices.

The argument in Tunis, in support of "progress" achieved at the talks, was an acknowledgement that the agreement was lacking but that the priority was to accelerate the implementation of the DoP.

Few officials in Tunis now use this argument to defend the recent tentative agreement. Mr. Arafat does not seem to have the support of some of his closest aides who appear to be distancing themselves from his decisions.

Media magnate wins Italian polls

(Continued from page 1)

economist Fabrizio Mennella. Umberto Bossi, abrasive leader of the Northern League, insisted Mr. Berlusconi's vast business interests disqualified him from becoming prime minister.

He also struck out at the National Alliance, whose performance appeared to have

made it Italy's third biggest party with 13.5 per cent of votes.

Mr. Berlusconi's Forza Italia polled 21 per cent and Mr. Occhetto's ex-communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) 20.4, according to returns for a proportional section of the lower house vote.

No percentages were available for individual alliance

members in the more important constituency voting.

It would be difficult for Mr. Berlusconi to form a cohesive government without the league, which polled 8.4 per cent.

"We are the political force which brought down the old regime," the gravel-voiced Bossi declared.

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S. African peace summit bid collapses

JOHANNESBURG (R) — A South African peace summit called to halt spiralling violence collapsed Tuesday when the Zulu king said his people needed time to bury their dead after Monday's carnage in Johannesburg.

Police said at least 51 people were killed and 173 wounded in Johannesburg and its township after a march by rival Zulus in support of King Goodwill Zwelithini's demands for a sovereign state ended in a bloodbath.

King Goodwill said the summit, planned for Wednesday, should not be held until after Easter in early April to allow the Zulu bereaved to bury their dead.

"It is unlikely the meeting will take place," KwaZulu government spokesman T.C. Memela said from the home-land capital Ulundi.

President F.W. de Klerk called the summit with ANC chief Nelson Mandela, the king, and the king's uncle, Inkatha Freedom Party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, to stem violence threatening the country's first all-race elections only four weeks away.

Police said the full scale of Monday's bloodshed, in which at least three policemen were killed, was only becoming apparent as hospitals sent in

casualty reports.

The king said it would be most inappropriate to enter talks after the mayhem in Johannesburg "even before the Zulu bereaved have buried their dead."

The summit would have been the first face-to-face meeting between the country's four key political leaders.

King Goodwill said in a letter dated March 28 that a summit the week after Easter was possible "provided the violence has abated and the simmering anger in our communities has sufficiently subsided and the dead have been laid to rest."

Political analyst Richard Cornwell said even if the summit went ahead, there was no guarantee violence would diminish and create conditions for free and fair elections in areas where bloodshed was endemic.

More than 150 people have died in the Zulu heartland of Natal and the adjoining KwaZulu homeland in the past 10 days in political battle between supporters of Mr. Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha.

Mr. Buthelezi accused the ANC Tuesday of planning the massacre of Zulu marchers outside its Johannesburg head-

quarters Monday.

"The killing was pre-planned. The ANC had located sharpshooters on top (of its headquarters) and other buildings in the immediate proximity. They were carefully placed so that they could do the hideous deeds that took place," he said in a statement sent to Reuters.

"No reasonable person could possibly doubt what took place near the Shell House headquarters of the ANC... was a willful slaughter of people who had every democratic right in the world to be where they were and doing what they were doing," said Mr. Buthelezi.

"I am outraged that people exercising the same democratic right that the ANC claims for themselves — to air views and express themselves politically — should be shot at by sharp-shooting snipers," the Inkatha leader said.

Meanwhile, gunmen in a minibus fired at the ANC headquarters in Johannesburg Tuesday, close to where the eight Zulu marchers were killed.

"Shots were fired at the ANC building but there was no damage and no casualties," a policeman at the scene said. Police said several shots

were fired.

They were searching for the minibus but it was not known how many people were in the vehicle, which sped past the corner where eight Zulu marchers were killed.

The window of a parked car was shattered. Police briefly cordoned off the area and a spokesman, Major Eugene Opperman, said police were investigating.

Earlier Tuesday, police reversed a decision to launch a weapons raid on Shell House despite having search warrants.

In a prepared statement, police called the incident a "non-search."

Warrant Officer Andy Piekie, a Witwatersrand police spokesman, said the police had obtained a number of search warrants "to gather evidence necessary to investigate the happenings in Johannesburg yesterday."

"The South African Police, however, did not search ANC Shell House in Plain Street, for which a search warrant had been issued," Mr. Piekie's statement said.

It gave no further details, but independent Radio 702, quoting a "highly-placed source," reported that Mr. Mandela had intervened.



Armed policemen take positions with automatic rifles while Zulus take cover during a gunbattle at the ANC Headquarters in Johannesburg (AFP photo)

Parliamentary crisis looms in Ukraine as only 49 candidates win seats

KIEV (AFP) — Only 49 candidates won seats in the first round of voting for Ukraine's first post-Soviet parliament, forcing more than 400 races into run-offs and raising fears of further instability in the troubled nation.

Electoral Commission Chairman Ivan Yemets said the second round of voting for remaining seats in the 450-member legislature could take place as soon as Sunday.

Under Ukrainian electoral law, the second round of voting to the remaining 401 seats must be held by April 10, with the two top vote-getters from the first ballot facing off.

Mr. Yemets told a news conference that dozens of candidates came close to reaching the 50-per cent cutoff mark for victory, but it was unclear if a second round would be sufficient to decide all remaining races.

He said that 226 seats must be filled to allow the new parliament to convene and pass laws, while 300 deputies were needed to form the quorum necessary to vote on constitutional amendments.

Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk warned that if the 300-deputy threshold is not reached after a second round of voting, the old Soviet-era legislature would continue the function of voting.

Clinton climbs 10 points in latest poll

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton's job approval rating climbed 10 percentage points after his prime-time news conference last week, the latest ABC News-Washington Post poll found.

Fifty-seven per cent of those polled on March 25-27 approve of Mr. Clinton's job performance, compared with 47 per cent in a poll dated March 22 and 52 per cent on March 8. Forty-one per cent disapprove, down from 45 per cent on March 22, but up slightly from 40 per cent on March 8.

The poll also found a majority of the respondents — 56 per cent — believe the Whitewater affair is not an important issue. Forty per cent said it is important.

Mr. Clinton, on vacation in Coronado, Calif., gave a thumbs-up signal when asked about the poll, and said he was "in good shape."

"He was very encouraged when I showed him the poll numbers, both on the approval rating and on how he's handling Whitewater," said White House spokesman Jeff Eiler.

The poll showed that 69 per cent believe the Whitewater affair is distracting the federal government from important work, and 71 per cent believe it has been over-reported by the news media.

Nonetheless, 44 per cent said Mr. Clinton is "holding back something important" about Whitewater, and 46 per cent said he has not revealed enough about his personal finances.

The survey was conducted from March 25 to March 27 among a random sample of

1,029 adults. The results have a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points.

Meanwhile, The House Banking Committee chairman said Monday he's "not interested in protecting anyone" in the Whitewater affair, and defended his decision to cancel what would have been the first House hearing on the subject which has bedeviled the Clinton White House.

Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez told a news conference the committee would conduct hearings "at the proper time and under proper circumstances" — not, he said, while Republicans planned to get maximum publicity and interfere with a special counsel.

Mr. Gonzalez's comments did not concern the broad, Whitewater hearings the House voted to hold if the bipartisan leadership agrees on a time and format.

The Texas Democrat referred to legally required hearings on the savings and loan cleanup agency, which were scheduled on March 24 and then cancelled by Mr. Gonzalez.

Republicans, citing a House rule that allows the minority party to call witnesses, had invited a list of witnesses that read like a who's of the Whitewater affair.

Mr. Gonzalez said that under his interpretation, the Republicans could not conduct an investigatory hearing if the majority Democrats did not plan to do so.

"I'm not interested in protecting anyone. Only in preserving the integrity of the committee," Mr. Gonzalez said, adding he only has met

President Clinton on one occasion and never talked to the White House about Whitewater.

Meanwhile, the ranking Republican on the committee said Sunday he cannot conclude two top White House aides acted illegally when they complained to a Treasury official about the hiring of a former Republican-appointed prosecutor in the Whitewater case.

"The White House may have made a mistake, but I think it'd be premature to draw any extraordinary conclusions," Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa, said Sunday on television.

"It's natural that they would be upset" with a decision by the Resolution Trust Corp. to retain former U.S. attorney Jay B. Stephens to investigate the failed Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, Mr. Leach said of senior White House aides Harold Ickes and George Stephanopoulos.

In a separate development, a Newsweek magazine article quoting a tax expert as saying Hillary Rodham Clinton didn't use her own money in a successful investment scheme was based on a "misunderstanding" with the source and the magazine may apologise to the White House, an editor said Monday.

Newsweek, in its April 4 edition appearing on newsstands Monday, quoted Professor Marvin A. Chirelstein of Columbia University Law School as saying Mrs. Clinton did not invest any money of her own to realise roughly \$100,000 in cattle futures trading profits in 1978 and 1979.

Hand dryers blow food-poisoning bacteria — study

LONDON (R) — Ninety five per cent of public washroom hand dryers tested emitted bacteria which could cause food poisoning or broncho-pneumonia, a British study released Tuesday showed.

The survey, carried out by the University of Westminster in London, said the number of disease-causing bacteria on the hands could be multiplied by more than 600 per cent when a hot air hand dryer was used.

"The university's report suggests that where hot air dryers are used in sensitive locations such as hospitals, their use should be seriously reconsidered on health grounds," a statement released with the study said. "It shows that 80 per cent of the hot air dryers tested in hospitals blew out bacteria which could cause broncho-pneumonia," it added. The study included air dryers in 35 locations in public washrooms in hospitals, fast food restaurants, shops and railway stations. Sixty-three per cent of the devices in all locations tested blew out bacteria which indicated faecal contamination. The study said pull-down linen towels reduced the total number of bacteria on people's hands by more than 40 per cent and paper hand towels by nearly 60 per cent.

Norwegians 'in secret talks' over Munch picture

OSLO (R) — A group of Norwegian investors are secretly discussing paying a ransom for one of the world's most famous paintings stolen in Oslo last month, a Norwegian newspaper said Tuesday.

The independent Dagbladet said the anonymous group had been negotiating with thieves' representatives over a five million crown (\$680,000) ransom for the 1983 Norwegian masterpiece, "The Scream" by Edvard Munch, which would then be given back to the National Gallery. "The Scream," showing a waif-like figure wide-mouthed in terror beneath a blood-red sky, was stolen from the gallery by two thieves on Feb. 12. Jens Kristian Thune chairman of the gallery's board, told Dagbladet he had been informed by the investors of the ransom talks and that he had told Norway's Culture Ministry of their plans. "I have not received signals (from the ministry) that will make such a solution more difficult," he was quoted as saying.

Woman receives compensation from Bonn for cow loss

GOMEL, Belarus (AP) — German authorities, acting on a receipt issued by the Nazi occupation administration more than 50 years ago, have compensated for a Belarussian woman's loss of a cow, a news agency said. Anna Voropayeva, whose cow was requisitioned by German troops in 1942, presented the document to a representative of a German relief agency this year, ITAR-TASS reported.

'Cheats undermine top China resort'

BEIJING (R) — Cheats in one of China's top resorts are fleecing tourists with swindles like the "free" 500 karaoke session, a newspaper reported Monday. The China consumer news said the scenic southern mountain town of Guilin had become such a haven for tricksters that its future as a holiday spot was in danger.

"When will Guilin stop ripping off its customers?" the newspaper asked. The town in Guangxi province is the centre of a region long popular with local and foreign travellers for its spectacular mountains and winding rivers. But now taxi drivers and tour guides, grown tired of depending on the goodwill of tourists, have decided to rob them instead.

"These Guilin people are really black-hearted," one Chinese tourist from Anshan was quoted as saying. The China Consumer News said one popular scam was the "free" karaoke session, where tourists are ultimately presented with a bill for as much as 4,918 yuan (\$565). A tourist from southern Guangdong province who refused to pay 200 yuan (\$23) for a bowl of noodles was robbed of 500 yuan (\$57) after she was body-searched, it said. Although authorities have imposed fines or suspending business licences, scams are increasing and threatening the city's tourism income, the paper said.

S. Korea hopes talks can settle nuclear crisis

BEIJING (R) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sun said Tuesday he was hopeful intensive negotiations could solve the crisis over the North Korea's nuclear programme.

In contrast to his warnings only days ago that South Korea's patience might be running out, Mr. Kim told a news conference in China he would persist in efforts "to resolve this issue through dialogue and negotiation."

Mr. Kim said the United States, Japan and Russia would be involved in trying to find a solution to the impasse over inspection by a U.N. agency of Pyongyang's nuclear facilities.

The West suspects Pyongyang is building a bomb, although the North denies it. "Through consultation and dialogue I believe we can solve this problem smoothly," Mr. Kim said. He repeated his offer to meet North Korea's leader Kim Il-Sung for talks on the issue.

The South Korean president, in Beijing as part of an Asian tour to defuse tension over Pyongyang's nuclear over, urged China to play an active role in persuading North Korea to end its confrontation with most of the world.

He told an audience at Beijing University that North Korea was at a crossroads and China and other Asian neighbours should help bring it into the family of nations.

"I ardently hope that China will play an active role in this effort," Mr. Kim said. "We have never wanted the North to be isolated and we will spare no effort to help Pyongyang join the international community as a responsible member."

Mr. Kim told South Korean journalists in a separate meeting his country would help North Korea develop its hard-hit economy once it dropped its nuclear ambitions.

North Korea said Tuesday it would not launch an attack on South Korea, despite recent warnings that the row over its nuclear weapons programme could lead to war.

"An emphatic 'no' was how the North's ambassador to Thailand, Li Do Sop, responded when asked about the possibility of attack. "We are defensive only."

"We have built many things (in North Korea). We don't want to destroy anything," he told a news conference in Bangkok.

Mr. Li criticised comments by South Korean Defence Minister Rhee Byoung-Tae that his 650,000-strong armed forces, aided by U.S. forces, could easily defeat North Korea's army of more than a million troops.

Tensions have risen on the Korean peninsula since International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors returned from North Korea this month, saying they had been prevented from completing checks at a nuclear site.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sinn Fein office attacked in Belfast

BELFAST (R) — Protestant guerrillas launched a rocket attack on key offices of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein in Belfast Tuesday, but there were no immediate reports of casualties, police said. The outlawed Ulster Freedom Fighters, determined to keep Northern Ireland British, said they carried out the attack on the building in Falls Road, a staunchly Irish nationalist area in the west of the city. They threatened to continue targeting Sinn Fein offices and members until the party, led by Gerry Adams, accepted an Anglo-Irish peace plan which calls on the Irish Republican Army to end its 25-year armed struggle to oust British troops from the territory and reunite Ireland. Protestant extremists have attacked Sinn Fein offices and its headquarters deep inside nationalist strongholds in Belfast several times this year in a show of strength. Security forces say they fear the Protestant guerrillas, whose violence has in the past mainly been retaliation against IRA attacks, are stepping up their campaign in order to scupper the same Anglo-Irish peace plan launched in December.

Sikh militant leader surrenders

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Ramesh Kanwar Singh, a leader of the flagging Sikh separatist campaign in the northern Indian state of Punjab, has surrendered to the authorities, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Tuesday. The news agency said Punjab police announced Singh's surrender Tuesday and presented him before journalists. He was described as one of the brains behind the waning campaign for a Sikh homeland called Khalistan (Land of the Pure) in Punjab, the rich farming state bordering Pakistan. Punjab Police Chief Kanwar Pal Singh Gill, who has led a two-year police fight in which hundreds of suspected militants have been killed or captured, attended a news conference in the state capital Chandigarh where Mr. Singh was presented. The surrender was another blow for the Khalistan campaign. Reporters were told that Mr. Singh had become disillusioned with the Khalistan campaign, which flared into violence in 1983 and went on to claim an estimated 25,000 lives, and decided to surrender.

44 die in U.S. after storms

ATLANTA (R) — A series of tornadoes and violent thunderstorms that ripped through five southern states Sunday killed at least 44 people, injured more than 350 and wreaked havoc on scores of rural communities, officials said Monday. The governors of Alabama and Georgia are expected to call on the federal government for economic assistance for the hardest-hit areas, where many residents who lost their homes are poor and have no insurance. Special damage-assessment teams in both states spent the day combing through communities blasted by storms to assess the damage. Government officials said it will be weeks if not months before life returns to normal for many people. The biggest death toll was in the northeastern Alabama town of Piedmont in Cherokee County, where a tornado slammed into the Goshen United Methodist Church during a Palm Sunday service, devastating the brick structure with about 140 worshippers inside. Authorities said 20 people died from injuries received when the church's roof collapsed.

Husband visits Aung San Suu Kyi

RANGOON (AFP) — The husband of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is in Burma to spend the Easter holidays with his wife, who is in her fifth year of house arrest, reliable sources said Tuesday. Military authorities made no comment other than to say that the visit of British academic Michael Aris had been scheduled. The official press did not report Mr. Aris' arrival. Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested in 1989 as part of a military crackdown on a nationwide pro-democracy movement. At first held incommunicado, she was later allowed to receive regular family visits from her husband and two sons. After her arrest, her National League for Democracy (NLD) went on to win national elections, but the junta — known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) — did not hand over power.

Hosokawa under attack again

TOKYO (R) — Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa came under fresh attack Tuesday over allegations of more shady financial deals, prompting shriller opposition calls for him to step down or call snap elections. Communist lawmaker Zenmei Matsumoto said Mr. Hosokawa was not telling the truth about a 1986-1987 transaction in shares of giant Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp (NTT) that the prime minister claims was conducted by his late father-in-law. Mr. Hosokawa told parliament he knew little about the 300 shares of NTT, bought in 1986 just after NTT went public. "That is a lie," said Mr. Matsumoto, a veteran scandal watcher in parliament who has embarrassed previous governments. "The share deal was done through an aide of Governor Hosokawa and arranged at the governor's office," he told Reuters. "I have the testimony of the investment consultant who arranged it." Mr. Hosokawa was formerly governor of Kumamoto prefecture in southern Japan. The latest accusation comes on top of a three-week-old opposition boycott of parliamentary budget business over a murky loan Mr. Hosokawa took from a trust fund, and as a new opinion poll showed the Hosokawa government's popularity slip below 50 per cent for the first time.

U.K. accepts EU voting compromise

LONDON (AFP) — The British government Tuesday accepted the so-called "Greek compromise," in the row over European Union (EU) voting powers, the Press Association and the BBC reported.

Prime Minister John Major's office declined comment, saying only that the premier would address the House of Commons on the question. The report followed a special cabinet meeting at which Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd outlined the Greek formula.

Foreign ministers meeting at Ioannina, Greece, Sunday set a 1600 GMT Tuesday deadline for European governments to formalise their positions on a deal that would end the dispute over where a blocking minority should be set in EU voting.

The deal worked out in Greece was designed to meet British demands that blocking threshold remain at 23 votes even after enlargement of the EU to 16 members, with the entry of Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway at the start of next year.

Under the proposal the four new nations will have written into their membership terms that 27 votes out of 90 will be the minimum required for a veto.

Earlier Tuesday, Employment Secretary David Hunt said the European Commission had given Britain assurance that it would not use the new system as a way of introducing social policy changes through the back door by disguising them as health and safety legislation.

Yeltsin's wife says Russians better off than ever

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin's wife Naina, in a rare newspaper interview, defended her husband's reforms Tuesday, saying Russians were better off than ever.

"You can buy whatever you want," she told the daily Kommorskaya Pravda. "Look back 10 years: Now when did we ever have such abundance in the shops?"

Her description contrasted sharply with the picture painted by opposition politicians of a decaying nation, where all but a criminal fringe are fighting off poverty.

Naina, who has no record of involvement in politics herself, complained newspapers gave the impression her husband was not interested in improving the people's lot.

Interviewed last week in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Naina was asked whether she supported her husband's policies.

"Tell me, are you personally any worse off?" she retorted. "I suppose not," came the response.

"You know, we have our acquaintances," continued Naina's first lady. "Believe me these are not high-ranking officials, they are ordinary people and none of them are complaining."

"I was in... Yekaterinburg (the Yeltsins' home town) and I cannot say they are any worse

off there. For some, things are difficult, for some, things are hard. But no worse."

In my view people have won the most important thing, their freedom. Now there is nobody looking over your shoulder and you have a chance to earn as much money as you are able."

Politicians all pay lip service to "economic reform." But much of the parliament said Mr. Yeltsin's rush towards capitalism is destroying production and begging the nation.

Naina dismissed the view 80 per cent of Russians were on the threshold of poverty, saying it was impossible all the commercial activity she saw was for a mere 20 per cent of the population.

"Unfortunately nobody bothers to mention that the situation in Russia is better than in the other republics of the former (Soviet) Union," she said. "That doesn't fit into the opposition scenario."

Naina also denounced speculation about Mr. Yeltsin's health as "dirty politics" aimed at the 1996 presidential elections.

"There isn't a single country in the world where they speculate about the president's health as they do here," she said.

"He's healthy, he's healthy. All this talk about his health is

just dirty politics," she told Kommorskaya Pravda. "Why are they suddenly making a fuss about this? It's because I'm getting close and they have at any cost to show that Boris Nikolayevich is ill."

Naina stopped short of saying that Mr. Yeltsin, who is 63, would run for a second five-year term in 1996.

The president has avoided committing himself. His spokesman Anatoly Krasikov Tuesday denied a report in the daily Izvestia that Mr. Yeltsin had decided not to stand.

"Boris Nikolayevich has not taken any decision on that matter, whether to stand or not to stand, it is still too early," he said.

Mr. Yeltsin's health has been the subject of intense speculation, especially abroad and in financial markets, since a bout of nervous exhaustion confined him to hospital in 1987.

Last week a U.S. television network, quoting unnamed sources, reported that he had been suffering from potentially fatal cirrhosis of the liver for years.

Naina said she was fed up with all the rumours.

"There is no defence against gossip. But sometimes I want to go out into the street and shout: 'People, stop and think, they do you say such hurtful things.'

"What illnesses won't they invent for the president?" she said. "He gets flu — they say he's seriously ill. He works at home — they say he's ill again."

"He arrived in Sochi, a change of surroundings is already a rest. He played tennis, bathed in the sea."

"Boris Nikolayevich does not treat his health lightly and if he was seriously ill he would have retired long ago."

Meanwhile, the prosecutor general's office launched a criminal probe Monday into recent media reports about plots to overthrow President Yeltsin.

In a statement carried by the Interfax News Agency, it said an inquiry has shown that newspaper stories about a group of high-ranking officials who allegedly intended to overthrow Mr. Yeltsin were false.

The group of yet unknown people who spread this information "apparently committed a crime that entail responsibility for slander, accompanied by the charges of treason," the prosecution said.

The charges carry a maximum prison term of five years.

Russian arch-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, asked about charges by a liberal opponent of a conspiracy to bring him to power, said Tuesday: "He's absolutely right."

Pacers rout Clippers

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Rik Smits scored 27 points and Reggie Miller added 22 on 5-of-6 3-point shooting, leading the Indiana Pacers out of an offensive slump with a 126-93 victory Monday night over the Los Angeles Clippers.

The Pacers, who broke a two-game losing streak, were averaging 87.9 points in their last 12 games.

They broke loose for 66 points in the first half against the Clippers, five more than they scored in a 93-61 loss at Cleveland last Tuesday.

In Seattle, Gary Payton scored 23 points and Seattle forced 23 turnovers in beating Denver.

The Sonics shot less than 40 per cent for the third time this season but their defense carried them to their fifth straight victory and 14th in their last 17 games.

Laphonso Ellis led the Nuggets with 20 points on 10-of-16 shooting. Dikembe Mutombo had 21 rebounds and nine points for the Nuggets, who had their four-game winning streak snapped. Seattle converted 34-of-43 free throws to the Nuggets' 20-of-31.

Olajuwon suspended

Meanwhile, in New York, Hakeem Olajuwon of the Houston Rockets, the league's third-leading scorer and rebounder, was suspended by the NBA for one game Monday for hitting referee Bill Spooner in the stomach with an open hand during Sunday night's game in Phoenix. The incident occurred with 7:26 left in the 113-98 loss. The 7-foot (2.14-metre) Nigerian centre was gesturing at Spooner to protest what he thought should have been a foul on the Suns' A.C. Green when he struck the official.

Olajuwon was ejected two seconds after Dan Majerle scored on an offensive rebound to put Phoenix ahead 90-78. Olajuwon had 21 points, 11 rebounds and five blocks.

"Spooner felt a shot in the solar plexus," said NBA supervisor of officials Darrell Garretson, who was at the game but did not work it. "That can happen with a guy running by, it can happen a thousand ways. I think he knew he had done something wrong by the way he left the floor."

14 Arab teams to take part in ART basketball tourney

Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — Fourteen teams will take part in the Arab Radio and Television (ART) Basketball Championship which will take place in Amman on May 5th through May 15th, according to President of the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) Awad Haddad.

He said 14 teams from seven countries have thus far agreed to participate in ART championship.

Two teams will be from Saudi Arabia, one from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), two from Qatar, one from Bahrain, two from Lebanon, two from Egypt, two from Syria in addition to Jordan's top two teams Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxi, said Mr. Haddad, who is also member of the tournament's organising committee.

He said the championship,

which is organised by the Amman-based Dallah Corporation for Communications, aims to promote relations between Arab states and to boost the performance of basketball players in the Arab World as a whole.

According to Mr. Haddad, the organising committee of ART, which will be headed by Minister of Youth Abdullah Oweidat, will include as members in addition to Mr. Haddad, Secretary General of the Ministry of Youth Majid Quteishat, Secretary of the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Muwaffaq Al Fawaz, representatives of Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxi clubs, the director of the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation, the director of Al Hussein Youth City and representatives of Jordanian newspapers and Dallah corporation.

Hectic life in the fast lane

PARIS (R) — Swimmers who have just climbed out of the water at the end of the World Cup series could soon be diving in more often for major championships.

The International Swimming Federation (FINA), intent on raising the profile of the sport, has signalled renewed interest in the World Cup and is also considering holding its long-course world championships every two years instead of every four.

More frequent world championships — the biggest event in swimming after the Olympic Games — would have disturbing repercussions for continental championship in an already crowded competition calendar.

FINA's introduction of short-course world championships, first staged in Palma de Mallorca last December and next set for Rio de Janeiro in 1995, has already cut across the European sprint championships to the annoyance of European administrators.

The long-course world championships, first held in Belgrade in 1973, are currently staged midway between Olympics with the next edition set for Rome this September. If they were held every two years

they would need to be rescheduled to avoid clashing with the Olympics.

The two-yearly European championships, with a tradition dating back to 1926, and the Pan-Pacific Games at present fill the years in between the Olympics and the worlds, so something would have to give.

"Always in life we have priorities," Cornet Marculescu, director of the FINA office, said at the Paris meeting which concluded the World Cup series.

"To increase the image of swimming we need a high standard of events. In short-course we have made a big step forward."

A federation commission is working on the calendar and looking into the possibility of changing the long-course world championship schedule.

FINA, which took over the running of the short-course World Cup series in 1992, now shares the organisation with national federations and originally planned to shed responsibility in 1995.

But, with records tumbling and meets successful, the international body has had a change of heart.

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Becker crashes out of Osaka Open

OSAKA, Japan (R) — Third seed Boris Becker crashed out of the \$650,000 Osaka Open tennis tournament Tuesday at the first hurdle, going down to American Robbie Weiss in three sets.

Weiss, ranked 113 in the world, pulled back from 0-3 in the third to beat the German 4-6 6-3 6-4.

There were comfortable victories in first round matches for four other Americans — top-seeded Pete Sampras, Michael Chang, Andre Agassi and Ivan Lendl.

Sampras defeated Stephane Simian of France 7-5 6-3, Chang beat Joern Renzenbrink of Germany 6-1 6-0, Agassi overcame compatriot Doug Flach 6-1 7-5, while Lendl disposed of Thomas Shimada of Japan 6-2 6-1.

Becker, troubled by a slow court and cold, windy conditions, squandered his lead in the final set to give 27-year-old Weiss one of the biggest wins of his career.

"I was surprised to come back... It's a great win for me," said the American.

Becker, whose greatest triumphs have been on the lightning fast grass of Wimbledon, said he found the hard surface in Osaka almost as slow as clay.

"It was difficult to play in the cold, but I tried my best," he said. "He came up with some good shots and played a good match."

Weiss felt beating Becker was his third best victory in pro



Boris Becker

tennis after wins against Stefan Edberg, when the Swede was world number two, and against Lendl, when he was ranked sixth.

He said Becker, who has now slipped to 14 in the world rankings, failed to produce his fearsome serve of old.

Chang, seeded second, cruised through his opening match against Lanky Renzenbrink, engaging in a succession of baseline rallies before deftly passing him time and again.

On the brink of defeat, Renzenbrink finally dug in his

heels, saving five break points before Chang served out the match.

"In the last game I made a couple of errors and that kind of opened the game a little bit for him," Chang said.

"For me it was important to close that game. I didn't want to give him any confidence on my serve at all."

Fifth seed Agassi, recently returned to the circuit after five months out with a wrist injury, rocketed through the first set only for spirited Flach finally to find his rhythm in the

second at a perilous 2-5 and 15-40 down.

"I kind of took it easy," Agassi said. "I didn't really think he was going to make the effort and then I lost the point and that can really change the momentum."

"I'm glad that I got out in two sets."

In other matches Tuesday, sixth seed Aaron Krickstein trounced Australian Darren Cahill 6-1 6-2, while number seven seed Brad Gilbert downed Japanese Ryuso Tsujino 7-5 6-7 (4-7) 6-2.

Tapie faces suspects in bribes probe

VALENCIENNES, France (R) — Marseille soccer boss and politician Bernard Tapie confronted other figures in France's soccer bribery scandal at a showdown in an investigating magistrate's chambers Tuesday.

Justice sources said the meeting was meant to shed light on the background to an alleged attempt by Marseille to bribe league opponents Valenciennes to lose a key match last May.

In a first confrontation, Tapie and his former right-hand man, Jean-Pierre Bernes, were questioned along with Valenciennes Chairman Michel Coencas, Mayor Jean-Louis Borloo and two other Valenciennes directors.

A second meeting was due later Tuesday between Tapie and former Marseille midfielder Jean-Jacques Eyedie, who has admitted handing over a 250,000 franc (\$44,000) bribe to a Valenciennes player

Australian Open final heads for five sets

MELBOURNE (R) — Australian Open organisers said Tuesday next year's women's singles final would be the best of five sets, although International Tennis Federation (ITF) officials stressed the move needed their final approval.

"Given the athleticism and professionalism of the elite women players today, the time is right," said Tennis Australia President Geoff Pollard.

Pollard and the tournament director, Paul McNamee, announced in a statement that the change from three sets would be brought in next January.

But ITF officials emphasised that the move needed to be approved first by their annual assembly in Hong Kong in September.

"The press release makes it appear a fait accompli but in fact it does need a change to the rules to do it," said ITF spokesman Ian Barnes.

Tennis Australia would propose a general amendment to the ITF's rules at the

September meeting. If that failed, they would ask to be granted a special exception similar to the one given to the year-ending Virginia Slims championships, the only women's tour even which already has a best-of-five-sets final, Barnes said.

"As a precedent has been set at the Virginia Slims finals I should think Tennis Australia would be confident of getting it," Barnes added.

McNamee said the move would give spectators greater value for money.

At this year's open in January, Steffi Graf earned \$325,000 by defeating Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario in a best-of-three-set final which took only 58 minutes.

"I think the public would have been very happy to see Steffi play another set the way she was playing," McNamee said. "And perhaps someone as strong as Arantxa might have been able to claw her way back into the match."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMARA HIRSH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠K57 ♣QJ83 ♦Q86 ♠A76

The bidding has proceeded:

North East South West

Pass 1 ♦ Pass Pass

1 ♠ 2 ♠ ?

What do you bid now?

A.—You have a pretty good hand, but don't hang partner for not selling out to one diamond. North is a passed hand and couldn't reopen with a double. Therefore, be content with a raise to two spades. Since North has already bid you cards, any further action will have to come from partner.

Q.2—East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:

♠AQJ43 ♣V ♦AK865 ♠A4

Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one heart. What action do you take?

A.—Normally, we don't recommend a takeout double on a two-suited hand, but this hand is too strong for a simple overall. The action we recommend is a double, planning to bid spades over a club response from partner.

Q.3—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

♠KQJ8 ♣Q9 ♦K84 ♠Q43

The bidding has proceeded:

North East South West

1 NT Pass 2 ♠ Pass

2 ♠ ?

What do you bid now?

A.—Normally, with 9 points and a balanced hand you would invite partner by bidding two no trump. Here, however, your high cards are concentrated in your long suits, overriding two possible sources of ♣s. Jump to three no trump.

Q.4—As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠K57 ♣QK4 ♦K52 ♠AK765

Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one heart. What action do you take?

A.—With the king-queen of hearts well placed behind the opening bid and a fair five-card suit, we think this hand is too strong for an immediate one-no-trump overall. Our choice would be to double, then bid no trump as cheaply as possible at our next turn. That shows a balanced hand worth more than a one-no-trump opening bid.

Q.5—As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠AK5 ♣9643 ♦8 ♠109873

Partner opens the bidding with two no trump. What do you respond?

A.—There's no question that you're going to play in game, but since your hand is unbalanced, a suit contract might be safer than three no trump. To check on whether partner has a four-card heart suit, use the Stayman-Convention. Bid three clubs.

Q.6—East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:

♠QJ1085 ♣V ♦AK883 ♠Q88

The bidding has proceeded:

South West North East

1 ♠ 1 NT Pass 3 NT ?

What action do you take?

A.—If you have a regard for your bank balance, pass. The auction marks partner with heart length, so there's a good chance that introducing your second suit could land you in four spades doubled on a 5-2 fit and a heart lead would threaten loss of trump control immediately.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Crown Prince, Princess Sarvath return home

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath Tuesday returned home at the end of a private visit to Austria. Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath were received upon arrival by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'ed Ben Zeid, Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef and senior civil and military officials.

Malhas leaves for ministers meeting in Cairo

AMMAN (Petra) — Health Minister Abdul Rahim Malhas Tuesday left for Cairo to take part in the two-day session of the Council of Arab Health Ministers, which starts here today. The Arab health ministers will discuss several issues, including health conditions of Palestinians in the occupied Arab territories, coordination with the World Health Organisation (WHO), and reports about activities of Arab Council for Medical Specialisations and the Arab Council for Health Documentation and Publications.

Child killed in shooting accident

AMMAN (J.T.) — An 18-month-old Badia girl who has shot accidentally by her 5-year-old brother died Monday, according to police reports. The victim's father told police that he took his family to graze their sheep, and when they returned home, his son took the rifle to place it in a safe place, and the rifle went off accidentally hitting the baby in the chest. Hospital sources said the girl, identified only as N.H.S., was declared dead on arrival. Police said they are investigating the incident. In another accident, in Mafrq, a 43-year-old man Monday was killed when the steam-roller he was driving turned over. According to traffic officials, the victim, Farouq Salameh, was driving too fast on a surface that could not accommodate the vehicle.

France urges speed-up in Mideast talks

PARIS (AFP) — France Tuesday deplored violence which left several Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip and called on parties to the Mideast peace talks to speed up negotiations. Foreign ministry spokesman Richard Duche said Monday's violence in Gaza "once again shows the urgency of the need to bring into force the Sept. 13, 1993, accord of principle on allowing the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho and the redeployment of forces." France, the spokesman added, "calls on all parties to exercise the necessary restraint and to accelerate negotiations to achieve rapid implementation of the interim autonomy" accord.

Armenia awaits crash communique from Iran

MOSCOW (R) — Armenia withheld any substantive comment on Tuesday about the downing of an Iranian plane which Tehran says was brought down by Armenian forces over disputed Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenian presidential spokesman Levon Zurbabyan, speaking by telephone from Yerevan, said: "We are aware of the statements circulated by various news agencies about the plane which is alleged to have been shot down. But the Armenian government has not had any official notification and we cannot react until we have received the communique from the Iranian side." Iran's official news agency IRNA, quoting a Foreign Ministry statement, said the military Hercules C-130 cargo plane was shot down by a missile fired by Armenians in Karabakh shortly after the plane had contacted the Yerevan control tower. All 32 people on board, including a number of relatives of Iranian diplomats based in Moscow, were killed in the March 17 incident. The mainly-Armenian populated Karabakh, which is administratively inside Azerbaijan, has been at the centre of an undeclared war between the two former Soviet republics for the past six years. Thousands have died in fighting. The Armenian government denies any direct involvement in the fighting, but it provides diplomatic and logistical support for the Karabakh Armenians.

Kuwait Islamists angry at traffic curbs

KUWAIT (R) — About 50 Islamists gathered at Kuwait University on Monday to protest against the introduction of tougher penalties for women who endanger traffic by driving with veiled faces, newspapers reported. "Such a decision does not serve the political stability that the ministry of interior authorities should maintain," Al Watan newspaper quoted Kuwait University Islamic studies teacher Abdul Razzaq Al Shayeji as saying. "We are against the decision... for the unjust imposing of it as if it was a type of a challenge to the feelings of the abiders (by Islamic rules) and honestly I regard it was a type of provocation," he said. Some students said they would go on strike for two days this week if the rules were not withdrawn. The students held their meeting after police visited the campus for two days running and handed out traffic tickets to veiled women drivers. Traffic authorities this week decided to withdraw for up to four months the driving licences of anyone caught driving with their faces covered with veils or male Arab head-dresses. Car licence plates could also be withdrawn for up to four months and repeat offenders may be jailed for up to a month. Such drivers were previously subject to court fines.

Motorbike gang kills watchman in UAE

DUBAI (R) — Police have arrested 10 glue-sniffing motorbike riders accused of clubbing a night watchman to death in the first recorded killing by an organised gang in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "It is the first time that a gang of youths actually agreed on and executed a murder with so much indifference," said Captain Abdullah Mubarak, head of internal security affairs in the UAE state of Sharjah where the killing took place. Members of the gang, some as young as 15 and one as old as 20, were charged with killing Pakistani watchman Bazil Zotari, 35, at a municipal car pound on March 25 and stealing five motorbikes. The gang members — six UAE nationals, three Iraqis and one Yemeni — had wanted to reclaim motorbikes confiscated by police from under-age or unlicensed riders. Police said the killing was cold-blooded. The guard had locked himself inside a room after he was attacked on the head with an iron bar. But the youths smashed their way into the room and hit him on the head again, Capt. Mubarak said. He died on his way to hospital. Capt. Mubarak said the crime "signalled the beginning of organised crime among youth" in the country. He said the youths were regular offenders and several had previous convictions. Two aged 15 and 16 have been referred to a criminal court. The rest aged 15 and 16 will be tied in a juvenile court.

Iranian foreign minister on African tour

NICOSIA (AP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati arrived in the West African nation of Guinea Tuesday, the first stop on a six-nation tour of Africa aimed at boosting ties. Tehran Radio quoted Mr. Velayati as saying in the Guinean capital, Conakry, that the aim of his visit was to "expand relations in various fields." Mr. Velayati made a brief stopover in the N'djamena, capital of Chad, en route to Guinea, the radio said. It said he met at the airport with his counterpart from Chad. The agencies said that Mr. Velayati would also visit Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and were aimed at boosting political, economic and cultural ties as well as regional and international cooperation. Noting that the six nations were rich in natural resources, IRNA said "Iran can have favourable cooperation with the said countries and can invest in their mineral and agricultural sectors in favour of common interests." It said the major drawback to promoting trade was the lack of direct air or sea links with Africa.

Croats, Serbs hold truce talks

ZAGREB (Agencies) — Croatian officials and rebel Serbs poured over maps on Monday during ceasefire talks called to try to halt fighting in Croatia's breakaway Krajina region.

International mediators said before the talks began that the two sides were close to signing a truce, but after several hours it appeared the process would move more slowly than anticipated.

U.S. Ambassador Peter Galbraith said the discussions on demarcation lines were "complicated" and probably would continue into the evening.

Russian envoy Vitaly Churkin urged agreement to avoid losing momentum. "What we want is not progress, we want agreement," he said. International mediators hope the ceasefire accord would be a first step to resolving the dispute over the Serb-held breakaway Krajina region in Croatia.

"The border is long, the terrain is difficult, the maps are many and the history is very unpleasant," Mr. Churkin told reporters earlier outside the Russian embassy, where the two sides met for the second time in a week.

U.S. special envoy Charles Redman joined Mr. Churkin at the talks to press rebel Serbs and Croats into agreeing a lasting truce that would end a three-year-old conflict.

Diplomats say resolving the Krajina conflict is a key element to any overall settlement in the former Yugoslavia.

Asked if he expected a ceasefire agreement, Slobodan Jovic, who led the Serb delegation, said: "Yes, probably."

The Serbs and Croats are discussing a permanent truce with each side withdrawing infantry by one kilometre and heavy weaponry by 20 kilometres, diplomats involved in the talks said.

A spokesman for the mediators, John Mills, said an hour into the talks that the

mood was "optimistic" as the two sides studied maps with U.N. military officers.

In the afternoon, the leader of the Croat delegation, Hrvoje Sarinic, head of Croatia's national security office, left briefly, presumably to consult with Croatian government officials.

Mediators insist the proposed accord focuses only on a separation of forces and does not address political or economic issues.

Serbs rose up against Croatia's declaration of independence from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia in 1991 and captured a third of Croatia's territory in bitter fighting.

Croats and Rebel Serbs signed a ceasefire in 1992 and the United Nations deployed 14,000 troops to patrol volatile areas. But the truce has been violated many times.

If the truce pact is signed, the two sides would begin negotiating the reopening of roads and telephone lines as well as questions over Krajina's political status, mediators said.

Despite a U.N.-brokered ceasefire signed in January 1992, there has never been a formal end to the six-month war in Serb minority. The war left at least 10,000 people dead and Serb rebels in control of one third of Croatia. Without a final end to hostilities, sporadic skirmishes between the two have persisted.

Russia and the United States, working together on solving the war in neighbouring Bosnia, have been pressuring the two warring parties in Croatia to reach a final truce. Mediators know that a lasting peace in Bosnia cannot be achieved as long as Croat-Serb tensions simmer just across the border.

Attending Tuesday's talks along with Mr. Churkin were Mr. Galbraith, as well as U.N. and European Union representatives.

Iran wants to send 120,000 pilgrims to Mecca

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran hinted Tuesday it would try to send 120,000 pilgrims to Mecca this year, more than double the number Saudi Arabia says it will allow.

Tehran Radio quoted the head of the pilgrimage organisation, identified only as Rezaie, as saying, "this year Iran has complete readiness to send more than 120,000 pilgrims."

The broadcast, monitored in Nicosia, quoted him as saying that the number was based on an agreement signed between Iran and Saudi Arabia three years ago.

The pilgrimage issue and Iran's displeasure at Saudi Arabia's huge OPEC quota, which Tehran blamed for the plunging world oil prices, are at the centre of a simmering feud between the two countries.

In recent weeks Iranian officials have lashed out at the Saudis, accusing them of "creating obstacles" for Iranian pilgrims.

The feud appears to be coming to a head following three years of cool but correct relations between the two titans of the Muslim world, who are also the top producers inside the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The Iranians, whose economy has been reeling under the oil price collapse, are especially indignant about Saudi Arabia's refusal to trim its giant 8 million barrels a day oil production.

At a weekend meeting in Geneva the 12-member cartel failed to reach agreement on cutting its 24.5 million barrels a day production ceiling after Saudi Arabia opposed the move.

Iran's oil minister, Gholamreza Agazadeh, said in Tehran Monday that the Saudi move had forced prices even lower. Prices fell by more than \$1 per barrel over the weekend.

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran plummeted in 1987 after 402 pilgrims, most of them Iranians, died in clashes with police and they tried to march on the grand mosque in Mecca.

In 1988, when the Iranians ended the boycott, they were allowed a provisional quota of 115,000, more than double their entitlement of 55,000.

Officer dismissed Goldstein call minutes before massacre

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A duty officer said on Tuesday that he did not think a call he received from the killer's wife minutes before the Hebron massacre was significant, although she may have hinted at her husband's intentions.

Shlomo Edelstein's testimony came as the commission of inquiry into the Feb. 25 mosque massacre began its fourth week of hearings.

Miriam Goldstein called Edelstein, on duty as security officer for the Kiyat Arba settlement, and asked him to track down her husband just 10 minutes before he entered in the Ibrahim Mosque and shot dead dozens of Palestinian worshippers.

Goldstein, a physician, had called Edelstein at 5 a.m., asking him to send a jeep over to the medical centre where he worked. Edelstein said he tried Goldstein on a special line at the medical centre, while keeping Mrs. Goldstein on hold.

When no one answered, Edelstein said he called the jeep driver, Moti Unger, who told him he had just dropped Goldstein off at the mosque, a site holy to both Muslims and Jews.

"I told (Mrs. Goldstein), 'Moti says he dropped him off for prayers at the cave,'" Edelstein told the commission, using the Hebrew term "cave" for the site. "So she said to me,



VICTOR: Media Baron Silvio Berlusconi leaves a polling station after casting his vote on late Monday, the second day of Italian general elections. Final results announced Tuesday.

Israel has new water plan

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel Military Industries have proposed a desalination project that would include construction of a new, artificial Jordan river to provide Israel and Jordan with water in the 21st century, an official confirmed Monday.

The proposal was made to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at a meeting called last week to rethink Israel's water and energy problems in light of the peace talks, a political source said.

Four proposals were discussed at the meeting, among them a long-term plan for a Dead Sea-Mediterranean Sea canal that would produce hydroelectric power for desalination, the source said. The cost of the project has been considered prohibitive.

At the meeting, head of Israel Military Industries Dan Shomron presented the "new Jordan river" plan that involved building a 120-kilometre pipeline and a long, narrow dam bridging the Jordanian Israeli border.

According to the plan, water would be drawn from the Mediterranean Sea then piped to a desalination site in the Beit Shean area in northern Israel.

The water would flow down a 320-metre incline, yielding power for desalination.

The clean water would then be piped to the dam and the new river along the border. About a billion cubic metres of water would flow through the dam annually. Israel now used about 1.8 billion cubic metres of water a year.

The cost of the project, \$3 billion, is to be financed mostly by its German partners.

According to the plan, the cost of the desalination would be cut in half, to 50 cents per cubic metre.

Israel Ministry Industries spokesman Avishai Ben-Yacov confirmed details of the project that were published Monday in the daily Yedioth Ahronot.

But the political source stressed that the plan was brand new and no decision had been taken to take it further than discussions.

Water expert Dan Zaslavsky, a former head of the Israel water commission, said the proposed plan was worthless and said the idea that it would cut desalination cost in half was nonsense.

"This is not a new Jordan river, they are just trying to make an impression with the words. I can't see how it could be worthwhile," Mr. Zaslavsky said.

Mr. Zaslavsky, also a former top official in the energy ministry, said many similar plans had proved unfeasible.

Water is one of the issues being discussed in the multi-lateral peace talks between Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians.

A recent study by Worldwatch Institute in Washington reported that 26 nations were short of water, 14 of them in the Middle East and North Africa. Many are expected to double their populations within 30 years.

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COLUMN

Slatkin succeeds Rostropovich at National Symphony

WASHINGTON (R) — Conductor Leonard Slatkin named Monday successor to Mstislav Rostropovich as music director of the National Symphony — promised to give the orchestra an American perspective. His appointment under a contract extending to the year 2000 was announced at a news conference by officials of the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts, where the orchestra is based. Now conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Slatkin, 49, will take over when renowned cellist Rostropovich, 67, retires at the end of the 1993-1994 season. Rostropovich announced his retirement nearly two years ago, setting off a wide search for a successor. Born of Russian parents in Baku, in what is now Azerbaijan, he studied music at the Moscow Conservatory before going on to win numerous honours including both the Stalin Prize and the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom. Married to Galina Vishnevskaya, the couple have two daughters. Slatkin, with the St. Louis Symphony since 1979 and acclaimed as one of America's top conductors, will be only the fifth music director of the Washington-based symphony since 1931. He will hold the title music director-designate until the 1996-97 season, when he will assume the title of director.

'Australia settled for 60,000 years'

SYDNEY (R) — Australian scientists Tuesday said they had found new evidence confirming that modern man settled Australia 60,000 years ago and spread across the rugged continent within 20,000 years. Using new dating technology, scientists at the Australian National University (ANU) dated human settlement at a site in the Kakadu region of the northern territory back 60,000 years. They also found signs of civilisation dating back 40,000 years in Allen's Cave on the Nullarbor Plain near Ceduna in South Australia. Richard Roberts, a member of the team which made the discoveries, said the new findings hint at a fantastic story of survival by early aborigines in some of the most hostile conditions on earth. "If people got to the Kakadu area 60,000 years ago and were already in the south sometime earlier than 40,000 years ago, then aborigines had settled the continent in all its extremes in less than 20,000 years," said Mr. Roberts, a geochronologist who dates geological deposits. "That's a hell of an undertaking in a continent that goes from desert to tropics." Mr. Roberts told Reuters. "It shows an amazing ability to adapt to different environmental conditions." The Kakadu finding confirms earlier research in the same region, reported in 1990, dating human settlement to between 50,000 and 60,000 years ago. "The new research confirms that modern people had reached Australia 20,000 years before the end of the Neanderthals in Europe," said Professor of Archaeology Rhys Jones, head of the university team.

Rower was almost out of food when he quit voyage

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — British rower Peter Bird said Monday he was down to just one day's supply of food when he gave up his attempt to row across the Pacific Ocean after spending 304 days alone at sea. "I made the decision to stop. I don't feel too badly about it," Mr. Bird, 47, said after being reunited with his family in San Francisco Monday. Mr. Bird, who lost 20 pounds but otherwise suffered only swelling feet and a bad back during the voyage, said he felt fine. When he gave up after battling half-way across the Pacific, he had only four freeze-dried meals left, enough food for about a day, he said. A merchant ship picked him up on March 12, taking him to Japan where he spent a few days recuperating before flying to join his mother Joan, girlfriend Polly Wickham, and their two-year-old son Louis in San Francisco. Mr. Bird set off from Vladivostok, Russia, on May 12 last year, aiming to become the first person to row single-handed across the Pacific from Russia to America.

Panic in Istanbul night-life district after Islamic win

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Panic took hold of Istanbul's night-life district Tuesday as the Islamic Welfare Party — which has made no secret of its desire to crack down on "excess" — was set to win the city's municipal vote.

Though Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's True Path Party held the overall lead across Turkey as counting continued after Sunday's municipal elections, the Welfare Party (PP) was confirmed as the winner in the capital Ankara and there was little doubt it would also take this ancient capital on the Bosphorus Strait straddling Europe and Asia, now Turkey's biggest city.

The latest results, announced by the Turkish news agency Anatolia, said PP candidate Melih Gokcek had won the mayor's post in Ankara and his counterpart in Istanbul, Tayyip Erdogan, was ahead with 25.48 per cent.

The charismatic and fiercely anti-Western PP leader, Necmettin Erbakan, had forecast his party would take Istanbul, proudly speaking of a "second capture of Constantinople," the city's name when it was the last bastion of the eastern Roman empire before it was taken by the Turks in 1453.

Businessmen in the Beyoglu district in the heart of old Istanbul were bracing for the final results, voicing open concern about what might happen next as a few hundred PP supporters were already celebrating victory at the district's PP headquarters.

Umit Firat, the owner of one bar on Istiklal Street, the district's main drag, told AFP he and his local colleagues in the restaurant and night club businesses felt they were facing an "Islamic threat" and were "worried about their fate."

He said they feared the PP victory might encourage what he called "Islamic fanatics" to launch a campaign against what they deemed an immoral group of people selling alcohol.

Some people in the night-life business took this as forecasting a possible intimidation drive or even a wave of expulsions from the district.

Mr. Firat, the bar owner, said several businessmen on Istiklal street got together just before Sunday's vote and formed an association to "resist" any Islamic campaign that might be launched against them.

The PP, which won the Beyoglu district, drew broad support from the local residents. Though Christian minorities peopled the district for centuries, they have gradually been replaced in the last quarter-century by residents from Anatolia — a less educated people from the countryside living here in extremely poor conditions who observers said were easily swayed by PP campaign promises.

Nusret Bayraktar, the PP mayor-elect for Beyoglu, said he would prohibit public new year's celebrations in the quarter, seeing this as a "Christian" tradition.

He also declared a "war" on bars and clubs where prostitution was tolerated or any drug trafficking.

Mr. Erdogan, the PP candidate set to become Istanbul's next mayor, has also warned he will shut down the city's brothels in Ziraat Street, run by a well-known Armenian "madame," Matild Manukian.